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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[OTHO REELIED, AND THEN FELL HEAVILY, STRIKING HIS HEAD AGAINST THE MARBLE OF THE FIREPLACE!]

## WOMAN AGAINST WOMAN.

### CHAPTER XXI.

MARY plunged into the bustle of the rehearsals with avidity. She was grateful for all the friction, delay, fuss, and bother that surrounded the preparations for the theatricals. It gave her little time to think. She dreaded the long night hours when she lay awake trying to dull thought and let her weary brain rest.

The deception of her position was a thorn in her side. By nature candid, honest, and truthful, it was little short of a sin to her to be masquerading in a false name beneath the roof of those whom she felt truly wished and intended to be her friends. She said nothing of this to Esther, for there was nothing to be done. The play must be played out now until the bitter end.

Since that first evening, in that one moment at the piano, she noticed, with a throb of joy at her heart, that Angelotti had evidently accepted the position; and as he saw she did not intend to allude to the past, or to let him even so

much as discuss the future, it was very evident she imagined he was only too relieved and glad to play into her hands, and let things take their course.

Esther was more than astonished at the marvellous way in which Mary bore herself at this time—a time when any woman might well have been pardoned for exhibiting some natural weakness. She felt she had never thoroughly understood Mary's character until now. There was no need to urge or to strengthen a feeble purpose in every way. Mary comforted herself just as Esther desired, and, being a shrewd and wise young woman, she held her tongue, and never even so much as mentioned Angelotti's name when they were alone together.

Her mind was completely set at rest on one point. Whatever love or infatuation had existed in Mary's heart for this dark-eyed, soft-voiced Italian, with his apparent gentleness and guilelessness, not a trace of it remained. Indeed, Esther did not need it spoken in words to tell her what mental pain and vexation Mary was enduring in her revulsion of feeling against this man.

Esther also was sufficiently a woman of the world to understand that it was this very horror and repugnance to even a memory of what had been and was past that was Mary's strongest assistance at this moment. Had she cared, even in a sentimental way, for that dream of her early girlhood, she must have betrayed herself in some small way, but now they had been three days at the Castle. Mary had been thrown constantly into Angelotti's companionship, and during those three days Esther, who watched her beloved friend with the tenderness and eagerness of a mother, could not see one moment in which the calmness was broken, or the cold indifference was permitted to lapse.

She saw several other things, however. First, that Ione's jealousy was growing every hour, and that Lady Greville Earne had fully determined to call herself Mrs. Arbuthnot's enemy. Secondly, that Angelotti, clever as he was, could not hide his chagrin and anger at Mary's treatment of him, and that the peaceful future she had sketched out for the girl she loved so well threatened to be disturbed, sooner or later, by this man's machinations;

and, thirdly, Esther noticed almost immediately that there was a great change in Greville Earne.

She found herself watching him nearly as carefully as she watched Mary. It had been the sunny look on his handsome face when she first saw him that had attracted Esther's artistic eye really more than the beauty of his features, or the vigour and manliness of his physique.

He had seemed so buoyant, so full of life and the enjoyment of life, a man without a care, a man eager and ready for happiness, whose natural kindness and unselfishness seemed as though they must demand that happiness. The Greville of to-day was quite another being. The sunny smile came now and then, particularly when he was with his mother, but the happy expression seemed to have left his face altogether. Esther noticed particularly that Greville seemed always more or less preoccupied, and evidently talked almost with an effort.

If this change was observed by others they did not regard it as very strange, as he was about to embark in a political career, and, of course, must have a good deal on his mind. But, somehow, this explanation was not sufficient or satisfactory to Esther; and she could not rid her brain of the idea that Greville had begun to learn and know his wife as she really was, and that the gravity and shadow that rested on his face arose from this bitter knowledge.

Certainly Ione's conduct was, to say the least of it, trying to the patience of any husband.

She had no more self-control than a child. In fact, little Otto had far more dignity and tact than she possessed. Her vanity and jealousy were abnormal; and, did she imagine the smallest offence, she would lapse into a sullen, sulky disposition, which occasioned general discomfort, and made herself the object of comment and astonishment.

The fears her mother had felt when she had received Ione in Paris were, indeed, likely to be realised—Greville's wife was absolutely devoid of all *savoir faire* and that indescribable refinement and tact which should characterise a true lady. She was no more fit to fill her present position than she was to move a mountain!

Greville suffered each day some new mortification that stung him to the quick. Every hour, every moment, it was rendered more clear to him that Ione was a great mistake in the sense of even attempting to bear her marriage honours well, or to fill his gracious and graceful mother's place.

As yet the little social faults she committed were viewed with some indulgence.

Ione was considered a pretty, spoilt child, who had to learn the hard lesson of utterly abnegating self; or, at least, seeming to do so if she would rise to be a successful woman of the world. Her bad tempers were to a certain extent condoned, though her lack of manners could not altogether be overlooked.

Greville's proud heart contracted very often in those days before the theatricals. He quivered within himself as he imagined quickly the sneers and remarks his wife's foolish conduct would produce.

"Ah! did we not say so!" he felt the world would cry triumphantly. "A man has no right to marry out of his station; and Lady Greville is only a good example of the misery of making such a mistake!"

Greville knew the world. Had he not listened to such comments a hundred times? His heart yearned over Ione. To him she was still the child he had imagined her when they married.

By a resolute effort he tried to crush down the memory of that first shock that had come to him in the discovery of her untruthfulness.

He succeeded to a certain extent, but not altogether. It was not possible that such a thing could be forgotten; and, sometimes, when he sat thinking over the future, and

wondering how he could best arrange matters, the pang of disappointment and pain would come back to him, and set his heart aching with doubt and miserable uncertainty.

He did not know how to change Ione's conduct. His own pride forbade all thought of hurting her, and it was so difficult to speak out. It was a woman's task rather than a man's. A woman would know how to lead up to the bitter lesson that must be given so gently, that, maybe, the hint would be grasped even before the lesson was finished.

He felt he should stumble over his task, and he knew his weakness. Ione had but to wind her arms about his neck, and lift her face to his, and she could move him which way she liked.

There was one person, and one person only, who could help him in this—his mother. If he could have spared himself this bitterness of letting even his mother know that there was a cloud on his married life, Greville, it is needless to say, would have done it; but he felt that the cloud, small as it was, must be blotted out at once.

Ione must learn the lesson of self-control. The happiness and success of their future was in jeopardy if nothing were done to check her in what, after all, were innocent, if foolish, faults; and his mother, above all people in the world, was best fitted to school her son's wife to tread the high path fate had given her with the dignity and grace of a true woman.

There had grown, too, all unconsciously in Greville's mind of late, a woman's image—an image full of all those qualities with which he longed to endow his wife.

He found himself gazing at Mary very often. Her simplest action was a gratification to his eyes—she was so gentle, so quiet, so full of tact. He noted many little deeds of unselfishness done in so unobtrusive a fashion as to escape general notice.

It was the womanliness about her more than her beauty that touched him at this time, maybe. Quite involuntarily he found himself contrasting Ione's manners with hers, much to Ione's disadvantage.

Certainly, he had known one quarter the rudeness and coarseness Mrs. Arbuthnot suffered at his wife's hands he would have had no hesitation in giving Mary the palm for absolute good breeding.

Fortunately for his peace of mind Greville knew nothing of this, nor did Mary intend, by a single sign from her, that he should do so. She bore with Ione's foolish jealousy, which almost took the form of an insult occasionally, with rare grace and tact, although many and many a time her heart was sore and heavy, not on her own account, but on account of Greville.

"If she were only a little different," she would say to herself, as she let her thoughts rest on the newly-married husband and wife; "but with her nature I fear for their future. There must come unhappiness in some shape or form, and then—then one can only stand by and look on. It seems so thankless, so ungrateful, when I remember what he did for me!"

The kindness and charity Greville had shown her that bygone night had assumed far greater importance in Mary's eyes than perhaps it deserved; but then it must be remembered how sore and miserable she was. Life for her up to that time had been one long, bitter disappointment, brightened only by the thought of Esther and her never-failing friendship.

Greville's trust, his courtesy, his interest, betrayed in the most delicate way, had been as balm to her proud, aching heart. He was to her an angel that ministered comfort to the mind as well as to the body.

So it was she treasured up the recollections of his goodness, and magnified it easily the more she learned to know him.

Mary suffered for Greville when Ione committed some social fault. Somehow, she found herself studying him and working, almost unconsciously, to avert, if possible, some of these

foibles, and, if not possible, then to aid him by any means in her power.

A woman of tact can often manage to give a different complexion to things, and Greville little knew how eagerly Mary waited for any opportunity of smoothing down the difficulties that Ione caused by her bad manners and worse tempers.

It was not until the last rehearsal that a glimmer of what was going on between Ione and Angelotti came to Mary's knowledge.

The others had long since accepted the situation with complacency. The scandal that must follow on Greville Earne's imprudent marriage was, in their eyes, merely a question of time, and whether Ione began now or later to throw conventionality to the winds was, after all, only a minor detail.

There was some little surprise felt that Paul Angelotti should be the companion in her folly, but with the surprise there mingled feminine envy, for the Italian artist was a great favourite with women, and had so carefully played his game that not one of them despaired of being eventually chosen to be the sympathetic confidante of this poetical-faced man's sorrows and disappointments.

Not one of the fair guests assembled at the Castle then but did not feel envious of Ione's success with Angelotti, although they did not hesitate to accuse her of forcing the situation in a far more pronounced condition than it would have been under ordinary circumstances.

Mary was neither blind nor deaf, and at last she, too, became aware of the small scandal that was growing like a cloud on the horizon of Greville's future—a premonition of worse to come.

The knowledge of Paul's unscrupulous nature, of his treachery and cruelty to herself, made the danger all the greater.

If possible, the contempt, the abhorrence, she felt for this man grew stronger and deeper as she realised he would never hesitate to do the dirtiest wrong to one who had proved himself a friend in every sense of the word.

Mary had listened in silence to the stories she had heard of Greville Earne's goodness, and sincere liking for Angelotti.

"I believe he would have starved twice over when he first came here!" Lady Agnes Grey told her on this last day of rehearsal—her ladyship was always ready to enlighten any new comer with stories about anybody or anything—"If it had not been for Greville and Lady Barrockbourne. You see what fanatics they are about all music, and, of course, Angelotti coming; and, more than that, I know for a fact that Paul would have probably been lying now in his grave if Greville Earne had not stood up one night in some foolish quarrel, and actually carried him away in his arms like a baby. Oh! M. Angelotti ought to be proud of owning so good and loyal a friend as Greville Earne is, and has been to him!"

This last had been said with a sneer, and a glance towards a corner where Ione sat, with Angelotti bending over her. The glance had given Mary an electric shock.

All at once she understood that the little annoyances and disappointments she knew Greville was suffering daily, nay, hourly, from Ione's ill-chosen words or manners would be as nothing to the pain that lay before him in the future.

It came to her in a dim sort of way that Paul was pursuing his present course of action as much to vex and hurt her as for any other reason. He probably imagined he would pique her, and make her jealous by this very marked attention to a young, beautiful woman beneath her very eyes.

"It is worthy of him, indeed!" Mary said to herself, her pale lips curling in a sneer. She rose after a moment, and went away to a big room up in an old part of the Castle, where Esther was ensconced, swathed in one of her favourite blue blouses, busy painting the scenery for the little stage in the ball-room.

Lord Danstan was in constant attention on



Esther. He had lost his boyish heart to her. "She was such a real good sort!" he declared, "and good for any amount of larks!" and "then she was such a dab at painting!"

"If you were to put one more letter in that word you might be nearer the mark, Lord Dunstan!" Esther had said with a smile when she received this praise. "Between 'dab' and 'daub' there is so very little difference."

Mary stood behind Esther, and watched her in silence for a moment. Whenever she was troubled or agitated she found great solace and sympathy in Esther's presence.

Her brain was in a whirl at this moment, so many confused and painful thoughts were surging within it. She did not believe as yet there was anything but the merest desire for a flirtation on Ione's side, born of her almost insensate vanity; but then it was this vanity that was answerable for so much folly, and that there should be the slightest whisper—should have been circulated already—coupling Lady Greville's name with Angelotti, told Mary only too truly that the matter could not be regarded with indifference.

As for Paul she was more and more convinced that he was devoting himself to Ione simply to see if he could not wake some emotion in her breast, and rouse her out of the cold, impassiveness with which she had consistently treated him. It was Greville she was thinking of.

"The world is so ready to see wrong," she said to herself; and with that nobility of spirit which was one of her greatest characteristics, she divested Ione's memory of all the bitterness and insolence that had been so very apparent, and with justice and charity refused to let a doubt creep into her mind. "She is a silly, foolish, vain child, with no brains and little heart. She does not know the world, or she would be more careful. It is only folly—nothing more!"

Lord Dunstan was very busy, helping to stretch canvases, and prop up bits of wet scenery.

"I suppose they are all quarrelling downstairs, Mrs. Arbuthnot?" he cried. "Lord! I never knew that theatricals were so trying to the temper before! Have you finished rehearsal?"

"We have not begun yet," Mary said, in her low, sweet voice, that unconsciously trembled a little.

"I heard old Gregory shouting away in the blue drawing room as I came up just now! He has got a voice like a Chinese gong!"

"I don't think Colonel Gregory would be very complimented at your criticism!" Esther observed, stepping back to survey her painting.

"Oh, well!" Dan declared, in his boyish fashion, "I don't care. If he doesn't like it he can lump it. Did you see Angelotti's face when he—Gregory, I mean—was singing last night? It was a treat, and no mistake! Have you sung your duet yet to-day, Mrs. Arbuthnot? I always like to come and hear that."

"I have not seen M. Angelotti until just now," Mary said, and Esther knew by the sound of her voice that something was wrong.

"Oh!" said Lord Dunstan, removing Esther's last bit of work, and putting a fresh piece before her just as the door was pushed open, and Greville came in. "I suppose he can't tear himself away from Ione. If I were Greville I should cut up rough, and no mistake. Those two do nothing but sit in corners and spon. My wife shan't sit in corners, I can tell her!"

"What will you do with her, Dan? Keep her on the dome of St. Paul's?" asked Greville, with a little laugh.

"Listeners never hear any good of themselves!" Lord Dunstan retorted. "Why didn't you shout out, Grev, and say you were there?"

"This room is too small for two people to

shout in, isn't it, Mrs. Arbuthnot?" Greville answered, in a lazy sort of way.

Mary did not look at him. The sympathy she had for this man told her as clearly as any words that the boy's thoughtless speech had gone straight home. She suddenly felt a yearning come upon her to stand before Greville and shield him from all the buffets and blows that the world might give. She did not attempt to analyse her feelings. She accepted them as being there, and there they must remain. All was confused, and in her mind much was—as was indeed natural—painful and disturbing. Yet through the trouble and the doubt there had run lately a vein of pleasant thought that was connected wholly and entirely round the image of Greville Earne—thought that had grown dangerously often and prominent in her mind; and now that pleasant thought was allied with others full of sympathy, of womanly pity—womanly desire to aid and soften any little sorrow that might come across the path of this man who had so high a place in her heart.

As she went down to the rehearsal an hour later, Mary had come to one conclusion.

"I shall put a stop to further folly in this matter by all the means in my power, even—if I have to bring myself into closer contact with Paul. It will be a sacrifice. No one but myself knows how difficult it is to even speak with him, but," Mary said to herself, with a sigh that came from her heart, "it is my duty, and if I can only spare him pain I am more than repaid!"

#### CHAPTER XXII.

THE theatricals at Barrackbourne were announced for three evenings. The ball-room was not too large when the stage had been erected, and it was found impossible to seat all the invited guests at one time.

They were, therefore, divided into two sections for the first and second evenings, and the third was devoted to the tenantry, farmers, servants, &c.

Ione had telegraphed to Paris for her gowns. She was to be a princess in the fairy operetta, and she determined to be magnificent, with jewels and costly dresses.

The thought of the splendour of her appearance was a comforting one when she remembered that Mary would have to appear as a poor singing maiden in dingy rags. She had suffered so many jealous feelings since Mrs. Arbuthnot's arrival that anything that would give her the least ascendancy over her rival was delightful.

Thus Angelotti's attention was a necessity to her.

She caught a glance now and then from Mary's beautiful eyes during the first rehearsal, and Ione gave a laugh of complete pleasure as she said to herself there was not a doubt that Mrs. Arbuthnot was furious because M. Angelotti paid her no more attention than if she had been the ugliest and oldest woman in the world.

Ione was in right good temper during this rehearsal. She laughed and coquetted with Paul in the most open way, and Angelotti seemed to the onlookers to be much amused by her preference for his company.

If he trespassed beyond the bounds of a slight flirtation when he was alone, and encouraged Ione's vanity and folly by some dreamy words, which were as meaningless as words could be, Angelotti was careful not to do this in public.

To Mary's proud, sensitive spirit the very smile on his face was an insult. She longed to tear down the veil in which he had enveloped himself, and show the world how vile an impostor this man was.

Though she had set herself the task of putting an end to Ione's stupid conduct Mary did not commence at once. It was a difficult task. She did not know quite how to begin action. She went through her rehearsal mechanically.

"Mrs. Arbuthnot seems a little tired," Angelotti said once, in his low, soft way. The words reached Mary's ear, and he was rewarded for the first time by seeing a wave of colour come into her perfect face.

"The statue melts," he said to himself, with a mocking smile.

Mary looking at him at that moment understood his thought.

"I shall be glad if you will sing our second duet once again, Monsieur?" she said, quite coldly.

Angelotti crossed immediately to her side. "I live when I sing with you!" he said, with a tone of passion in his voice.

Ione, who was at that moment speaking to Lady Agnes, saw the expression on his face, and marked the eagerness in his manner. Her anger and jealousy choked her for the moment.

Lady Agnes laughed softly.

"M. Angelotti is caught at last," she said, noting with pleasure Ione's discomfort. "What is there in Mrs. Arbuthnot more than in we poor other women? No man can resist her!"

They were foolish words, spoken in a sort of empty malice; and frivolous, selfish, worldly as she was, Lady Agnes would probably never have uttered them had she known the consequences.

This seeming desertion on Angelotti's part was the match that set fire to a flame in Ione's heart. She set her little white teeth, and vowed that she would not rest until she had got Paul Angelotti at her feet, and she had shown Mary that she was the stronger—at least where this man was concerned.

Her temper was abominable during the rest of the rehearsal, and it was an unfortunate thing that Lady Barrackbourne should have decided to have her quiet little talk with the girl at this particular moment.

Greville had gone straight to his mother, and, in his honest, manly way, had opened his heart to her.

"Let me speak to the child at once," the Countess said. "You are raising up a mountain out of a very small molehill, my darling. Ione is only a child. Folly is not crime. I will be as gentle with her as possible."

But though she spoke so confidently, there were tears in Lady Barrackbourne's eyes as she lay back on her cushions alone, and the shadow in her heart had grown deeper and deeper.

Little Otho was playing on the hearth, and as he saw the tears he ran to his grannie and kissed them away. He was lying in her loving arms as Ione came in, vexed, restless, full of angry thought about Paul and Mary.

It was the dressing hour, and she wanted to be in her room; Lady Barrackbourne always bored her.

The Countess received her gently, and began to speak of some other matter first, then gradually led the conversation round to the subject that was on her heart.

Otho sat before the fire, building a castle of bricks, and Ione stood on the hearth listening in aullen silence, twisting her rings round and round on her fingers.

Lady Barrackbourne said all she felt she might say in the most tender, delicate way. The girl's silence pained her. She did not understand it. It increased the difficulties of her task.

But suddenly, when she ceased speaking, Ione turned on her. Her pent-up anger broke forth; she was quivering with rage, her voice was almost inarticulate, she stunned the delicate woman with her words. Lady Barrackbourne had never been spoken to harshly before in her life, and Ione was a new and terrible experience to her.

"You think I care what you or anybody like you may say about me!" the young woman cried. "What is conventionality to me? You have been buried here for centuries, and are full of silly, old-fashioned ideas. I care as much for your ideas as I do for these bricks!" and, with a swift jerk of her foot,

she threw Otho's castle to the ground in a heap.

The child sprang to his feet, and looked at his grannie. "She lay with her hands over her face, and tears were trickling through the fingers. White as a sheet, Otho stopped and picked up a brick.

"You may knock down my castle as often as you like, you horrid thing!" he said, in shrill, excited tones, "but you shan't make my grannie cry!—you shan't! you shan't!" and with each little defiance he struck at Ione's hand with his sharp-edged brick.

Ione uttered an exclamation of pain. She turned on the child, caught him by the shoulders, and flung him from her.

Otho reeled, tried to save himself, and then fell heavily, striking his head against the marble of the fireplace as he fell, and as the door opened, and Lord Danstan, escorting Mary for her usual chat with the Countess, entered the room.

Lord Danstan rushed over to the fireplace. "How dare you! How could you!" he exclaimed, excitedly. "Ione, you are a brute! A poor little chap like him!"

Lady Barrackbourne was pushing herself up on her cushions.

"Give him to me, my baby, my little one!" she said, in a voice choked with emotion.

Mary moved a step nearer, then stopped; and then, with a panting heart and beating brain, she turned back swiftly and left the room.

The violence of Ione's rage was horrible to remember, and the sight of that poor, little, huddled-up figure lying senseless by the fire made her heart contract. She longed to go and minister to him, but she felt she had done wise to come away. It was not a moment for strangers to be present. Her thought was for Lady Barrackbourne and her proud spirit.

She groped her way along the dark passage. She would go back to the ball-room, Greville was there; she would detain him, if possible. She knew, with her illimitable sympathy, that however grieved or horrified, however justly angry Lady Barrackbourne was at this moment, she would never let Greville know the full horror of the moment; and if he did not go there at once it might be kept from him a little while.

As she reached the hall her heart almost stopped, for she came face to face with Greville and Dick Fraser, who had that instant arrived.

"We are off to my mother's room, Mrs. Arbuthnot! Dick is going to pay his respects. Will you come?" Greville broke off quickly. The light fell on Mary's face. She was deathly white, and was away to and fro uncertainly on her feet.

"Let Mr. Fraser go. I—I want you, Lord Greville. I—"

Dick had put out his hand to greet her, and her little cold one lay in it now.

"Great Heaven, Grev!" he exclaimed. "She is ill! She is dying!"

Greville pushed him slightly on one side. Mary lay in his arms senseless, silent as death.

Her lovely face was pressed down on his heart. Greville felt a strange thrill mingle with his pity and concern.

"She has fainted!" he said, tersely. "Standing too long at rehearsal, I expect. I shall carry her in here." He nodded his head towards a small library. "I am sure she would hate a fuss. Just go and hunt up one of the maids, or, better still, Miss Gall. Don't go near my mother. You look like a ghost yourself, Dick; you might frighten her!"

Greville carried his slender burden easily from the hall into the room. He laid her on one of the couches, and then moistened her brow and lips with water.

She looked to him like a snowflake lying back on the dark cushions.

A sudden longing came over him to comfort and protect this delicate, beautiful woman, who bore the imprint of sorrow on her sweet face.

He was gently chafing one of her hands as Dick came in with Esther, in great, though quiet anxiety.

In a few moments the faint passed away, and Mary opened her eyes upon the three faces that were watching her so eagerly. They would not let her speak nor move, though she whispered that she was quite strong—quite well.

Greville took her in hand altogether. "I am going to be a tyrant, Mrs. Arbuthnot! You are to lie still for half-an-hour, for I don't suppose you will sleep; but you are to try, nevertheless. Dick, go and see my mother. Miss Gall, I believe you are in great request on the stage. Please let me have my own way. I am going to write some letters, and I shall keep guard over Mrs. Arbuthnot. Let her attempt to move at her peril!"

Esther stood irresolute, but at last gave way. She went out of the room with Dick.

"She is not ill?" he asked, with a tremor in his voice. "You do not think she is ill? Grev. says the theatricals have tried her—that is all!"

"Yes," Esther said, after a little pause. "The theatricals have tried her, that is all!"

And to herself the staunch, loving friend was tortured to know what had happened.

Had Angelotti dared to threaten?

Esther clenched her hand. She would be patient a little while, but not for long.

Whatever came, she would protect Mary from the attacks of that man.

Dick went on his way to his aunt's boudoir, and Esther turned to seek the ball-room and the stage.

"I wish," she said to herself regretfully, with a glance after Dick and a heavy sigh, "how I wish I could tell him all! but I have not the heart to do it—it would give him such pain! and Heaven knows I would never hurt you, Dick, for a moment, even to spare Mary pain! The hurt will come soon enough, my dear, for you will speak to her one day, and then—" Esther crushed her hand over her eyes. Tears would come sometimes. Strong, reliant as she was, Esther was only a very human woman.

Greville sat down to the table as the other two left, and he turned up the lamp.

Mary lay as he had commanded her, with closed eyes, and Greville sat and looked at her face. There was such an influence of peace and rest about her, he could have gazed at her for hours.

He pondered about her and her sorrowful young face. It gave him a pang to remember her loneliness and her fragileness.

"She lay in my arms like a feather!" he thought to himself. "It seems cruel that one so young, so sweet, so beautiful, should have nothing but sorrow! Is her life ended, is her story written? Is her heart seared already? Poor child! she needs protection and comfort! Pray Heaven she will always have it from us!"

He tried to write his letters, but the task was difficult. He could do nothing but sit and look at her as she lay just beyond the light—a graceful form, an exquisite white face, a dream-picture of womanly loveliness!

She opened her eyes at last with a smile, and then got up slowly, somewhat weakly.

"Am I free?" she asked, in her sweet voice. "I feel so much better now; and I shall be late for dinner!"

"You are a true woman!" Greville said, with a smile, "when it is a question of dress. You—are you quite sure you can go upstairs alone, Mrs. Arbuthnot?"

He came to the door with her. They stood for one moment in the entrance.

A man was lying back in a low chair at the end of the hall smoking. He put down his paper as he heard their voices, and watched them intently.

He saw Greville hold Mary's hand in his. Then, as she turned away, he saw Greville stoop to kiss that hand.

There was nothing in the action—a simple, graceful courtesy. It was not that that

riveted Paul Angelotti's attention; it was the sight of Mary walking slowly down the hall to the fire, seeing, hearing nothing, as it were; but, thinking she was utterly alone, she raised the hand Greville had kissed to her lips, and let them rest there with an expression on her face that could not be misunderstood.

She stood so for a few minutes, and then slowly, gracefully, went back, and vanished up the stairs.

Paul Angelotti lit another cigarette.

"So," he said to himself, his blood coursing violently in his veins, "the marble can breathe and move for another. Why not for me? My wife, you must be taught your duty, that is very plain!"

(To be continued.)

## HIS ICE QUEEN.

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### CHAPTER XXII.

A HIDDEN SECRET.

FRANK STANLEY stayed on at Mr. Bramley's so as to be near Geraldine until her mother was able to come downstairs again, when he intended to speak to her openly, and tell her of his great love for her daughter; and the girl, anxious to pave the way for his kindly reception, determined to have a talk to her mother before he came.

Mrs. FitzHerbert was seated in an easy-chair beside the fire, with a languid air and a look of trouble upon her still beautiful face, when her daughter stood beside her and laid her hand tenderly upon her shoulder.

"How are you feeling, mother mine?" she asked.

"Better in health, darling, but fretted and bothered. I scarce know why. If I were superstitious I should say it is the foreboding of coming evil; but we can hardly be so mercurial as that, and I must not give way to morbid fancies."

"No, don't, dear! Sunshine is coming, and not shadows now. I feel very, very happy, mother. So let me cheer and comfort you," and Geraldine knelt at her mother's feet, and placed her arms lovingly about her neck.

Mrs. FitzHerbert moved uneasily. It was evident that she had something upon her mind which she wanted to say to her daughter, and knew not how.

"Mother," continued Geraldine, softly, "do you not want to know what has made me happy?"

"I thought, I hoped, it was my recovery, darling! We have been so much, so very much to each other all our lives," and there was a tremor in the woman's voice as she spoke.

"Of course we have, mother, and ever must be."

Mrs. FitzHerbert gave a sigh of relief.

"Those words soothe me, child. I was growing afraid for you—afraid that gratitude might tempt you to be foolish."

"What do you call foolish, dear?"

"To place trust or confidence in any man," answered Mrs. FitzHerbert, bitterly. "No, Geraldine, you have me and I have you. Let us be content as we are."

The girl's face flushed fitfully.

"Mother, are not you grateful to Mr. Stanley for all he has done for us? You would not have had me, and I should not have had you but—but for him!"

"My child, some obligations can in no wise be returned. This is a case in point—reciprocation would be inadequate and impossible. We must content ourselves with being passively grateful. Mr. Stanley's road and ours in life will lie very far apart. He is only a visitor in the neighbourhood, and will shortly be leaving it."

"I am not so sure of that!" answered Geraldine, with a sunshiny glance. "Mother, I do not think he is at all anxious to go away."



I have seen a good deal of him lately. He has told me many things, but not that!"

Mrs. FitzHerbert's hands trembled. She tapped the ground impatiently with her remarkably pretty foot.

"My dear, he must go! You do not understand the case at all."

"No, I do not understand. I am content to be happy and ignorant," and Geraldine's sweet face was turned full upon her mother's.

"I knew the shadows were coming," said the elder woman, impatiently. "I had hoped, darling, that like myself, you had had enough of men and their heartless cruelty!"

"Frank Stanley is not cruel. He is as gentle and kind as a girl!"

"You ought not to have received him here, child. I heard to-day that he has been here constantly of late."

"And now, darling, you hear it from me! Mother, Frank has become very dear to me. I love him. There! the truth is out now, and I want you to be very kind to him. First for my sake, we will say, but it will very soon be for his own."

Mrs. FitzHerbert sat and stared at her like a woman transfixed.

For a time she seemed unable to speak and frame her words; when they came they rushed out as water bursts forth in a hurried commotion.

"Child, child, it must not be—it cannot, shall not be. He, Frank Stanley, is the last man in the world to whom I would give you, the very last. Surely you must have seen my desire to avoid him. That you should trust any one again, Geraldine, simply astonishes me, after the way you have once been treated; but to think even of trusting him, a nephew of Sir Godfrey Hamilton! No, no, it is worse than impossible. Give it up, child, give it up! Never let me hear his name again," and her voice rose to an hysterical cry.

Geraldine sat looking at her mother in blank amazement. This violent outburst of feeling, of apparent anger and animosity, was so unlike anything she had ever seen or heard from her before.

She felt positive impatience with her.

"Mamma," she said almost coldly, "you cannot be well to speak like that. Is this your gratitude to the man who has saved your life?"

"I wish he had not, then, if this is the reward he wants. I told you we could make him no return."

"But, mother, why should I treat him with rudeness and discourtesy?"

"Have you forgotten your experience with Captain De Lacy?"

"No, I remember it well; but it pains me no more. I can even say now I thank him for deciding as he did. I have this time chosen a man who is worthy."

Mrs. FitzHerbert arose suddenly, and left her daughter upon her knees.

Geraldine got up slowly, regarding her mother with wondering eyes, for she was fiercely pacing the room; her face was cloudy, flushed and excited, and she seemed to have really forgotten her daughter's presence, for she muttered, as she went, words not meant to reach her ears.

"After all these years of sorrow and sacrifice, to have it all opened afresh, it would be more than I could bear. I have suffered enough. I can go through no more. As if he would consent—his nephew, his heir! No, I will never ask him, never. I have accepted nothing at his hands, and I will accept nothing. If he can be cruel, so can I. If he can be proud, so can I. If he can deal out scorn, so can I. If he can hate, so can I. I have nothing to thank him for, nothing whatever. I would die sooner than ask him a favour, and that my own child should wish it."

She sunk feebly into the nearest chair, and looked about to faint.

Geraldine went upstairs and brought her some sal-volatile and water, and asked her to drink it, which she did eagerly, after which

she seemed calmer. Then Geraldine spoke again.

"Is it very unnatural that I should desire a happy life like other girls, mamma?" she inquired. "Have patience with me, and you will see that I am not this time trusting blindly. Frank Stanley is a man in a thousand. He loves me, and is ready not only to stand by me, but by you too. He will trust you as I have ever done; nay, he does trust you. He has already told me so. I do not know what your sorrow is, but if you cared to tell me, I should, perhaps, understand better. If I could help you, indeed I would."

"You can help me. Give up the idea of marrying this man. Questions must be asked which I cannot, will not, reply to. The annoyance will be ten times worse than it was in India. Heaven only knows where it will end if you set the ball of inquiry rolling. It is better for me, ay, and better for you too, to crush this affair at once and for ever. Had it been any other man, something might have been done. But put it out of your mind that you can be anything to Mr. Stanley."

Pale, indeed, grew the girl. All the lily returned—the sparkling frost covered it once more.

Never had a greater depth of misery lurked in the beautiful eyes, for never before had she doubted her mother.

The white face turned to her full of agony. "Mother, are you ashamed of your child? Have I, indeed, no name by which you can own me? And if so, is the sin mine? Heaven knows the suffering has been. Why am I not to love and wed like other girls? Why should Sir Godfrey Hamilton shun me, and refuse to let his nephew marry me? What have I done? Am I, indeed, nameless, and one to be scorned?"

The agony of the girl's mind wrung these passionate sentences from her lips.

She had suffered far more than Mrs. FitzHerbert dreamed of, for she had suffered in silence.

Had she reflected, nothing would have induced her to speak such words. As it was, she was aroused beyond her own self-control.

Mrs. FitzHerbert rose slowly and proudly. She looked just as she had done when face to face with General de Lacy.

She was once more the cold, stainless woman of marble. Her whiteness almost dazzled her daughter's eyes, as when the bright sun shines full upon the new-fallen snow, and well-nigh blinds you by its purity and spotless brilliancy.

Geraldine felt at a strange and unaccountable disadvantage. Her belief in her mother returned in full force.

Light, the light of goodness, shone from the mother's eyes straight into her own, but it was mingled with just anger.

"Geraldine," she said, coldly, "how dare you judge me? How dare you disbelieve in me, and insult me? I would never have believed it of you."

Hot tears of shame welled to the girl's eyes.

"I would never have believed it of myself, mother," she murmured, and went humbly down upon her knees before her. "Forgive me, dear; I am penitent. Mother, I am sorry, very sorry. It was the first time I have ever doubted you, and it shall be the last—the very last. But, dear, if you could confide in me, would it not be better? You ask me to sacrifice all my future happiness, and yet will give me no sufficient reason. Surely I am now old enough to understand any trouble which has befallen you. Will you not trust me with your confidence, dear?"

"Geraldine, I have a secret, but I cannot tell it to you. It concerns another besides myself, and to that other I swore in the past of long ago never to reveal it in life or death, and I never will!"

She was white as death—white to the very lips.

"Do you see now why you and Mr. Stanley must be strangers to one another?"

"No, mother! My heart aches for your sorrow, whatever it may be, but I cannot see how it in any way bears upon Frank, who is almost a stranger to you!"

"Will he not want our family history ere he links his fate with yours? Child, have you no sense?"

"Yes, mother, I had the sense to trust him. He will ask no questions whatever concerning you or me. I told him all I know about myself, and why Cyril de Lacy broke with me; and, mother, is he not noble? He loved me all the more for my trouble. Could I help loving him after that? Frank is worthy, mother—worthy of your affection and mine. Only let him, and he will be the staff and comfort of our lives. He is so good, mother, so good and kind, so very unlike other men as you and I have pictured them. See Frank, darling! Let him plead for himself. You will soon, very soon, find out what he is, and he will love us both with all his heart!"

The girl pleaded pathetically, and her words touched Mrs. FitzHerbert's heart.

She averted her face. Her lashes were wet with unshed tears, and she was silent.

When she looked at Geraldine again the marble woman was gone.

"My darling, how I wish I could help you to be happy!" she said; "but I cannot. If Mr. Stanley is kind his uncle is hard, cruel, and unjust! If Mr. Stanley was content to ask no questions, Sir Godfrey Hamilton would not spare us! No, Geraldine, you must be brave! You must not think of marrying the nephew of such a man!"

"You know him?" faltered the girl.

"I knew him once," she answered, coldly; "and that was enough for me!"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"I DO NOT SAY BE TRUE, FOR I FEEL YOU COULD NOT BE FALSE!"

When Frank Stanley arrived at the Priory, Geraldine received him, and he was startled at the change in her.

She hid her best to hide her agony under the cloak of coldness, but Frank would none of it.

He had learnt to understand her, and knew that something troubled her.

"My Ice Queen!" he said, lovingly, "what has brought back the frost? I like to see my darling bright and happy best—much best! Sweetheart, have you any sorrow? If so, dear, share it with your poor old Frank! What is hard for one to bear falls lightly upon two! Try, mignonnette, and you will see that I am right," and he held out his arms to her.

The ice melted, and Geraldine was clinging to him, lovingly pouring out the story of her bitter sorrow.

"Frank! Frank! what am I to do?" she asked. "I love you now, and how can I give you up?"

"Give me up, darling! It is not to be thought of for a moment! Even a mother's commands cannot count in a case like this! It was ordained in Heaven that we are to be one! No one can change that, dear Geraldine! My heart and soul claim you! We will not anger your mother by antagonism, darling! We will, on the contrary, try and gain her love and confidence. Persuade her not to forbid me the house, that is all. I must see you, darling! and I would rather that it was under your mother's roof! When she comes to know me, perhaps she will trust me as you soon learnt to do! I will be patient with her for your sake! Do not make her any rash promises, dearest! Keep quiet with her, and trust to time—it is a great healer, and the most strong prejudices wear off by degrees. But why she should dislike me I cannot tell!"

"She says that she used to know your uncle."

"Does she? Ah! I see light. Then it is for his sake I am disliked and refused?"

"I think so. She said he would object to your marrying me."

"What if he did?"

"You are his nephew, and people say his heir."

"Geraldine, you do not think that would weigh with me, do you?" and he looked deep down into the wonderful eyes which were raised to his.

They smiled at him, but she did not speak.

"I see. I am to tell you first, my pure white lily, and so I will. My darling, my uncle's wealth would only be of value to me that it might bring you comfort. For myself it would be the pleasure and pride of my life to work for you. Every labour of love would be sweet to me. I have a good education to thank Sir Godfrey for; that is a gift which he can't withdraw. If he would like to leave his money to anyone else, let him. I should not count it in the scale to be weighed against you, my love! No, no, nothing can change me, Geraldine. All I ask is, be as true to me as I will be to you!"

"I will," she replied, earnestly. "Our position will be difficult—nay, we may even not see one another; but remember, Frank, whatever you hear, whatever you see, whatever happens, I love you, and I will be true. It will be better for you to return to The Towers for a little time. Mamma will not see you now. She positively declines to do so, and it is useless to press her while her opposition is so active. Perhaps Mr. Bramley will help us with her. I feel sure he will if he can."

"What can my Uncle Godfrey have done to offend Mrs. FitzHerbert?" said Frank, wondering. "And, what is more, the affront must be of a long standing, for he has lived the life of an anchorite ever since his return to England!"

"I cannot tell, and I suppose we shall never know."

"I think we shall, Geraldine. Take my word for it, your mother's secret has something to do with her dislike to my uncle!"

"My mother's secret we shall never know. She has sworn to keep it in life and in death. She told me so to-day."

"Never mind it then! Keep up your heart, darling! If we wait the clouds will roll by. Now that I have your love, darling, I can afford to wait. Only let me see you often, dear girl. I cannot do without sunshine while I wait!"

"I will do my best. Yes, you must come. Mother cannot forbid my being friends with you!"

"And what a sweet thing it is to be friends, darling, with the bright background of love to give it warmth and colour! I am willing to call it by any name till your mother comes round, which, mark my words, she will. I have a good fairy who will work for me, and I have more faith in her influence than in that of Mr. Bramley or anyone else. I will tell our troubles, with your leave, to Lady Marie St. Clare, and I am morally certain that she will find out some way of assisting us. She is sharp as a needle, as clever as a witch, and as good as an angel!"

"You are very fond of her, Frank!"

"Very; but you need not be jealous, pet. Fond as I am of Lady Marie I should never love her, I know, for I really tried. She was so very—very nice!"

"No; I will not be jealous, Frank. Why should I? You knew her first, and could have asked her to be your wife instead of me if you had desired to do so."

"Of course I could!" he laughed, "and I should have been refused. A fine knock-down to my vanity that would have been! And so you think I had better go back to my kennel for a time? Only on one condition, dear; that you will write to me, and keep me posted up in all your news!"

"Yes, I promise I will write—often, very often. But how long can you stay at The Towers?"

"Until Christmas, I hope. I am supposed to return to Storm Castle to keep my uncle company at that season unless you want me, darling; in which case you have the first claim upon my love and time."

"Six weeks!" murmured the girl. "I wonder whether things will have grown better or worse by then? Frank, you cannot think how disappointed I am!"

"What, in me, dear?"

"No, no. You have been more than good to me, Frank. I am very agreeably surprised in the genus man!"

"You naughty darling!" he laughed. "I am not surprised, for I always felt deep down in my heart that women were made of more refined materials than men, and that somewhere in the world one small darling was waiting for me to claim her for my own; and, Geraldine, my spirit claimed you, dear, as soon as our eyes met. I knew that you were the one woman whose soul would respond to my own."

"Frank!" she said, "if we had met, and I had been married to another, as I so nearly was!"

"No, little love, fate would not have permitted such irony. See how she stepped forward, even at the eleventh hour, and stopped it! She knew that you were making a mistake, darling, and that I was patiently waiting for my bride. She would not have robbed me so cruelly, Geraldine."

She smiled at him.

"Then I am very grateful to fate, Frank. And now I must send you away. Come over the day after to-morrow, early in the afternoon. I will not write before then, unless I have anything important to say."

"I am more than sorry to leave you, little one; but if I am to return to The Towers to-day I must be off, pack up, and get Bramley to drive me over. He is awfully interested in our love, dearest, and will be truly sorry to hear of this check. Good-bye, my sweet Geraldine. Remember, while I am away, how very precious you are to me, and take care of yourself for my sake. For the rest, whenever you want me I will come; only let me know, and nothing shall keep me from you."

The girl lifted her red, ripe lips to his trustfully, and his parting kisses rained upon them.

"I do not say be true, love, for I feel you could not be false!" he said.

"No," she answered, "that is right. As the needle needs must point to the north, so my heart must from now turn to you," and so they stood, with her arms about his neck, his around her waist.

"What was that?" she asked suddenly, turning very white. "I felt some one look at us! And, oh, Frank! I felt as if it were a horrible look. See, dear, see if anyone is outside the window! Open it, please," she cried excitedly, her beautiful eyes full of terror.

Frank Stanley was surprised; but he humoured her, and nobody was there. She stood by, with that strange fear in the sweet face.

"Are you sure?" she asked, with a sigh of relief.

"Perfectly certain," he said, as he closed the window, and took her protectingly in his arms once more.

"You are a little bit unhungry by this trouble, darling!" he said soothingly. "But you must try not to be nervous, for it does you harm. Tell me what you fancied you saw or felt?"

"I saw or felt an evil, wicked look, Frank. It was some one longing to harm you or me."

"But who, sweetheart?"

"The face had a look of Cyril de Lacy!" she answered, with an expression of fear.

"I am glad of that, little woman," answered Frank cheerfully. "You have somewhat over-excited yourself lately, and it has caused your mental retina to reproduce a face which has lately been unpleasantly in your mind. Dismiss the subject, Geraldine, dear, and do not let it worry you again. I do not like to see

my dear white dove so scared. And now I insist upon your sitting quite still until you feel altogether the thing again. There! Keep in that easy chair by the fire, and don't stir till you are warm through; you are shivering with cold. I would stay longer, but I know Bramley is waiting to drive me out, and I think I must have taxed his patience and good nature already. No, you shall not come out with me. I will see myself off. You will remain here to please me."

He leant over her, kissed her lovingly upon brow and cheek and lips; and, before she could stay him, he was gone.

She sat looking at the closed door, her heart full of love and gratitude.

How good he had been to her! how very good! and how he loved her! Whom he would have borne her mother's unkindness as he had done, without uttering one harsh or disagreeable speech.

Yes, her Frank was a very fine and noble character; there was no question about that whatever!

How fortunate she was to have gained such a heart! but how was it all to end? Would her mother ever give way, and consent to her marrying the man she loved?

He had been hopeful; but, then, he had not seen the white despair, the cold anger of her mother's face. He had not heard her decided refusal to receive or accept him.

Geraldine's heart grew very sad as she thought of it.

Now that Frank had gone, all hope slowly faded out of her heart. She sat gazing at the great cavernous fire—as maidens in love are apt to do—with wide open eyes, and in it she saw naught but one red glow, and not a single picture!

She started trembling to her feet.

"It looks like blood!" she muttered, with a shiver. "What—what has come to me? I never felt like this before! I declare I am afraid to be alone! Oh! if Frank were only here! If I could get him back! But, no; he would gently chide me for such folly! Twenty minutes already since he went away, and I have been dreaming ever since! I must not be so silly. I will go into the boudoir to mamma; she may want something. I am glad she did not forbid me to ask Frank to the house. Perhaps, if I am quiet and gentle with her, she will not do that. I must do my best. Why does not love run smoothly?"

She slowly crossed the room as she talked softly to herself, went out of the door and through the hall.

Was she wrong, or was there really the murmur of voices within the boudoir?

She felt quite curious upon the subject. She had no idea her mother would receive visitors till she was better.

She opened the door, and stood transfixed to the spot, for she was face to face with Captain Cyril de Lacy!

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### LADY MARIE'S ADVICE.

It was a damper to Frank Stanley that Mrs. FitzHerbert should not wish him for a son-in-law; but he was of a sanguine, happy, hopeful disposition, and Geraldine's love made such sunshine in his heart that he would not allow himself to be cast down.

He found Mr. Bramley waiting for him as he had expected.

The horse was standing harnessed in the stable, the dog-cart in the yard—both ready for a start when required.

Frank announced at once that he wished to return to the Towers that afternoon, and the Rector agreed.

There was a look of gravity on his kind face, but he asked no questions, and his visitor quickly packed the small portmanteau full of clothes which Lord Carstairs had thoughtfully sent over, and they were upon their way in a quarter of an hour.

As soon as they had fairly started, Frank



told Mr. Bramley as much of Geraldine's story as he felt justified in doing, repressing, of course, the account of her engagement and disappointment in India, for he felt every confidence in Mr. Bramley, and was not wrong in his estimate of him.

He was exceedingly sorry to hear the turn things had taken, and promised to use what influence he might possess with Mrs. Fitz-Herbert in their favour.

Lady Marie was downstairs for the first time, and looked really pleased to see them both when they entered the beautiful drawing-room at the Towers, where she and her mother were doing a little needlework in the waning light.

"What, you, Frank!" she exclaimed, "and Mr. Bramley too! Now, this is an unexpected pleasure! I am glad to see you!"

"And so am I!" said the Countess, graciously. "I hope, Rector, you will stay to dinner?"

"Ask me another day," he laughed. "I have promised to go to the Priory this evening."

"Ah!" replied Lady Marie, wickedly, "then we will say no more. I know we cannot offer the same attractions! Frank," and she turned to him, "have you engaged yourself too?"

He let his eyes meet hers, and smiled.

"Not in the sense you mean, Lady Marie!" he answered low; but the Countess's sharp ears heard the remark, and she thought she understood both. "I have come to stay, Marie, if you can put me up again?" he continued.

"Of course we can! Don't you think this large house boasts of one spare bed-room?" asked Lady Marie.

"Ah! but my cousin is in possession of the one!" laughed Frank.

The girl's face changed. A decided sadness crept over it.

"Not so; Captain Hamilton has left us!"

"I didn't expect that. I thought he was here on a long visit, and that you were going to patch up a real friendship between us, Marie?"

"*L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose!*" she returned, with a slight shrug of the pretty shoulders; "but I couldn't, you see, as he decided to go away. Still you and he may meet even now. He has only gone back to Sir Jasper Ferndale's!"

Lady Marie spoke in a tone of decided indifference; but Frank was not deceived. He saw that something had upset his little friend since they had last met, and that she was even now smarting under her trouble; but he said no more then, knowing well it would be the least wise thing he could do to put her upon her guard. Already he began to connect the disappearance of the Captain with her sadness.

Mr. Bramley wanted to be off, but Lady Marie would not hear of that, and herself got up to ring the bell for afternoon tea, and presided at the fairy-like table, which was covered with a lovely cloth of her own embroidery, the most delicate of valuable china, and light and dainty fare.

A veritable rosebud looked the girl, busy over her kindly, womanly occupation of looking after the wants of others.

"This is Indian Hill tea!" she chirped, as she poured out the golden-hued fluid. "Two minutes' tea! We never stand it longer, for we like the flavour, and not the tannin. We are epicures, you see, and don't admire the senna-like mixture which some people call tea!"

"Whatever it is, it is very refreshing!" replied the Rector, sipping it critically. "Where is the Earl? I should like to have shaken hands with him."

He has gone over to see how Captain Hamilton is! He looked but poorly when he left here, and we have heard nothing of him since, save a letter of thanks written the same evening very hurriedly to save the post, as he had only just returned from the station,

where he had been to meet a 'Captain De Lacy.'

Frank almost started from his chair.

"Who?" he gasped. "Did you say De Lacy?"

"Yes, I think that was the name!" answered the Countess, in surprise.

"Did he mention his Christian name?" he asked, anxiously.

"No, I am sure he did not. Why, what is the matter, Frank? Is he a friend of yours?"

"A friend of mine?" echoed he; "not exactly!"

"An enemy then?" laughed the Countess. "His name seems to have stirred you up to an unusual pitch of excitement!"

"I do not know the fellow!" remarked Frank, coldly, "but I have heard of him, and that is enough for me! I hope he is not a friend of Hamilton's?" and he turned inquiringly towards Lady Marie.

"I hope not also, if there is anything against him," she answered, gravely. "Not that Godfrey Hamilton is a man likely to be led away by anyone. He is like a rock!"

"All the better for him," struck in Mr. Bramley. "And if I don't show a little firmness myself my horse will catch cold; he has been standing half-an-hour, poor beggar! I would not have him taken out, but just threw my rug over him. I did not mean to be a minute, and now, good-bye! Stanley, your room is ready for you at the Rectory; take possession of it whenever it suits you, without further invitation. I will give my servants instructions to take care of you whenever you may come over. I shall miss you, old man! It has been pleasant to see your bright face on the other side of the fire, when I have to much of my own company," and, with the usual farewell, the Rector of Harlington started.

Frank went to his room and settled in his traps, returned to the drawing-room, where, much to his delight, he found Lady Marie alone, the Countess having gone to dress for dinner.

"And don't you require any dinner?" laughed Frank.

"Yes; but I am indulged. I have a medical certificate that I am to do just as I like for the present; so I don't dress, and I have my dinner sent in here."

"That means that you are still feeling very poorly, little woman. I know your tricks; you never admit that you are ill."

There was a faint quiver of the lips, but she answered, bravely,—

"There is nothing the matter with me at all, Frank! Why do you try to put such ideas into my head?"

"Well then, there is something the matter with me, dear; and I want so much to talk to you," saying which he drew a chair beside her, and took her hand in a friendly fashion.

She turned to him with a look of interest.

"I am sorry if anything has gone wrong, Frank. Can I help you in any way?"

"I hope so. Marie, I believe in you, and in your powers of assistance. I don't forget how you stood in the gap with my Uncle Godfrey, and now I fancy I have got into a worse scrape with him than ever. Not that I especially mind that. His money is a matter of almost indifference to me. I won't say quite, for no one is altogether callous to what it will buy. Marie, do you remember saying you were sure that Sir Godfrey and Mrs. Fitz-Herbert had known one another before?"

"Perfectly!" she answered, gently withdrawing her hand from his keeping.

"Well, you were right, little one."

Her blue eyes lighted up with interest.

"How did you find it out, Frank? Do tell me; I want so very much to know. I felt drawn to that woman on the night of our ball, she seemed so terribly upset about something, and I believe it was at Sir Godfrey's illness."

"She hoped he would die, I suppose, and was knocked over because he recovered."

"She didn't!" cried the girl, indignantly.

"Frank, I never believed you could be horrid before! You men are all alike!"

"That is very much what Mrs. Fitz-Herbert says; but really, dear, without any desire to be horrid, the lady's conduct induces me to think so. It seems she absolutely hates Sir Godfrey."

There was a pause, then the fair head was shaken, and the bright eyes looked full at Frank Stanley.

"No, Frank, she does not. It is more likely by far that she loves him."

"Then she takes a mighty strange way of showing it."

"I daresay; it is a way women have." He reflected for the moment, then broke out again.

"Fshaw! Excuse me, Lady Marie. That old fossil! The thing is absurd!"

"He was not always an old fossil, you know. I think I may assert that he was born young; and, you see, he has evidently aged from circumstances rather than from years."

"At any rate," replied Frank, hotly, "Mrs. Fitz-Herbert dislikes him enough to care nothing for Geraldine's happiness because of him. She refuses to allow her to marry a nephew of Sir Godfrey Hamilton."

"And what are you and Geraldine going to do?"

"Wait, and be faithful. There is nothing else left to us!"

"You will not marry without her consent, then?"

"It may come to that; but Geraldine loves her mother blindly and devotedly."

"I like her all the better for that."

"So do I. I love to see her staunch and true in all relations of life, and I shall only try that as a last resource. Marie, I know that whatever I say to you is sacred, that you would not betray our confidence, so Geraldine permits me to tell you all, nay—she wishes it."

"I certainly will keep your secrets, Frank."

"Yes, I know that," he answered, warmly, and placed before her every detail of the story as he had heard it from Geraldine.

Lady Marie never interrupted him, but sat not only listening, but reading his expressive face from the beginning of the story to the end. When he had finished he looked at her.

"Well, little woman," he said, "what do you make of it?"

"I must think it all well out before I hazard an opinion," she replied, thoughtfully. "I am very sorry for you, Frank, very. But you are beloved, and can trust Geraldine, so you are not altogether to be pitied. Many are far worse off; but what can the presence of this man de Lacy portend? No good, I fear. I wish we could get the poor girl over here to stay, so that we might look after her."

"That would be delightful, Marie!" cried Frank, with beaming eyes. "Do you think you can manage it? Would Mrs. Fitz-Herbert let her come?"

"I am greatly afraid not, while you are here. But Frank, if I were you, I really think I should take the bull by the horns, and go straight to your uncle, and ask him to intercede with Mrs. Fitz-Herbert. He may not be so averse to do it as she is, and you may find out from him what really is wrong between them. That once discovered, you may be able to remedy it. But it is so very difficult to work in the dark. In your place I should go to him, and have it out. Rest assured that I will help you if it lies in my power; yes, dear Frank, with all my might, and I will write and ask Captain Hamilton to give an eye to Captain de Lacy in your absence, little as I wish to hold any communication with him," she ended proudly. "And my first drive shall be to see Geraldine. I will ask the doctor to let me go to-morrow. It won't hurt me if I am wrapped up well, I am sure."

"You are a kind little soul, Lady Marie. I hope you will be able to go, and you will take a letter to her for me, I know, to explain my absence. I have made up my mind to follow your advice. I will telegraph in the morning for the carriage to meet me. But, Marie, I

"Want you to tell me something. What has Godfrey Hamilton done to offend you?" She flushed to the roots of her hair.

"Dismiss the idea," she said, decidedly. "He has done nothing. Why, I have scarcely seen him since my illness. I do not care for men correspondents, that is all."

"And you still think him a good fellow?"

"A splendid fellow!" she answered, warmly. "Staunch, honest, and true. Tell his uncle so with my love, and that I hope he will yet make a friend of him, for my sake."

"I will faithfully deliver your message, dear. I shall in nowise grudge him a slice of his uncle's property, rest assured."

"No, I am sure you will not. Here comes my mother. Mother, Mr. Stanley is going to run home to see his uncle to-morrow, and hopes to be back in a couple of days."

The Countess smiled knowingly when she heard the news, and so did the Earl, and very heartily he wished him good-luck the following morning, as he started cheerily off for the station, promising a speedy return.

(To be continued.)

## AGAINST THE WIND.

—o—

"The bravest are the tenderest,  
The loving are the daring!"

—BAYARD TAYLOR.

"On, dear!" sighed Daisy, "how dreary it all looks!"

And indeed the view seen from the window of the big, white farm-house was anything but cheerful. Bare, brown, treeless land all around; a sullen, wintry sky overhead, and not a living creature in sight, except a distant speck of scarlet down on the slope—Baby Harry at play.

Indoors it was pleasant enough. Daisy was a brisk and tidy little housekeeper. When, immediately after dinner, her father had brought round the team, and he and her mother had driven off to town to do their regular weekly shopping, she had bustled about at a wonderful rate.

She had washed the dishes and put them in a shining row on the dresser; she had polished the stove, and brought in water; she had swept the room and straightened the cushions; she had set "sponge" for the bread that was to be worked at night, and baked early in the morning; she had shaken the gay strip of carpet, and dusted the clock-shelf, and ranged the chairs by the wall with mathematical precision.

Then she had washed her face and hands and brushed and braided her soft, brown hair.

She took off her apron of blue-checked gingham, put on one of snowy muslin, hung a clean roller towel on the rack, and put a kettle of water on the fire. Then she had taken up her book, and sat down to read.

It was a tremendously attractive book to the girl who had been brought up in the tameness and monotony of farm life; it was all about great, good and brave women; about Florence Nightingale, and Joan of Arc, and Grace Darling, and Ida Lewis, and heroines of every time and place.

A beautiful book! But Daisy laid it down with the consciousness that she had been intruding, that the company in the brilliance of whose deeds she had been basking was altogether too lofty and magnanimous for her.

So she went over to the window and leaned her head against the pane, and thought how hard it was to be a heroine in this place where nothing ever happened.

And pondering over this had caused her to give a long sigh, and voice her discontent over the dreariness of all creation.

It was no wonder her life was a wee bit lonely. The nearest neighbours lived a mile away.

Harry was too young to be company for her. What did he care about her vague, delightful dreams—about her heroines?

And her parents had decided she was not strong enough to go to school that winter. Indeed, were she permitted to do so the girl would find it a recreation—merely that. For she knew quite as much as her rather inefficient young teacher could attempt to teach her.

She was a slender, delicately formed girl of sixteen. Her hair, of a crispy silkiness, was parted over her forehead in old-fashioned style. Her eyes—large, hazel, dreamy—had a certain quiet, direct way of regarding one. Her rather clumsily made gown had a frill of home-made crochet at the neck and wrists.

How the windmill was creaking! And how the bare, snow-ball branches in the front yard were rattling! and what a brisk tattoo the skeleton sunflower by the back door was playing on its panels!

But Baby Harry was enjoying himself. She could see him running up and down outside, dragging his little waggon after him.

She turned away. She sat in the big wooden chair. She curled herself up like a comfort-loving kitten. And thinking, somehow or other, she thought the cozy kitchen away.

She didn't live in Yorkshire, within five miles of the town of Whinedge. She was not Daisy Brown at all. She was a brave woman in a frail boat, out on a stormy sea. She was a helmeted heroine, leading hosts to battle. She was—

What a deafening noise! Was it the clang of a coming army? Was it the beat of drums, the clamour and clash of swords, the tread of marching feet?

No, not any of these. Only the creaking of the fan of the windmill, which was whirling at an astonishing rate. Only the noise of shaking window-frames. Only the clatter of milk pails piled outside the door.

Slam! Bang!

Daisy sprang from the chair. Erect she stood, dazed, bewildered, still half asleep. A shutter had been blown violently against the window. Had a storm begun while she slept? She rushed to the casement, looked out—rather, she strove to look out. Ten feet beyond the pane she could see absolutely nothing. The whole world was white, wild, whirling.

"A snowstorm!" gasped Daisy.

But it was no ordinary snowstorm that had blown up. It was the most terrific storm that had been known for years.

Suddenly she cried out, such a frightened, quivering cry:

"Harry! Baby Harry!"

Quick as a flash she flung a heavy old shawl of her mother's over her head, and unlatched the kitchen door.

The furious wind tore it from her hold, and dashed it fiercely back against the wall. Vainly she strove to close it behind her. The snow was driving in, swirling over the floor. She loosened the storm-door. That, the wind dashed into place just after she had made a frantic plunge into the storm. Oh, such a storm!

Daisy had lived on the moors since she was a baby, and had seen the elements in their many moods and caprices. But she had never seen or imagined anything like this.

From the four quarters of the earth the wind seemed blowing. The snow had not the softness one associates with snow. It was a dense, enveloping, impenetrable cloud, filled with particles, icy, stinging, sharp as needle points.

The cold was intense. Objects ten feet away were absolutely indistinguishable. Ten? Nay, they were mere shapes at five—at three!

From the rear of the house a narrow path ran down past the barn, past the paddock, towards the moor.

In that direction fled Daisy. The shawl was torn from her head. She held it in her

fingers as she ran. She would need it when she found Harry.

But soon she was off the walk, and floundering along through rifts and drifts of blinding snow.

Where was the barn? She strained her eyes to make out the familiar structure. It was blotted out. All the world was blotted out. She could feel nothing, see nothing but snow—nothing!

Where was the paddock? She was answered by running into a barrier. She flung out her hands as the shock sent her reeling. Her palms were cruelly lacerated by contact with the barbed wire which formed the pasture fence. She knew now where she stood.

About two yards to the left began the slight descent at the bottom of which she had last seen the child she sought.

Her shawl wound itself around her body in a manner which impeded her progress as she stumbled on. She could feel she was going down the slope—feel, for sight was useless in such a storm.

The dear little lad! if she could only find him! She imagined him crouching down, trembling, sobbing, frightened; and growing stark and helpless with cold.

She tried to accelerate her speed—to rush down the incline. She tripped, fell; but she was up again in a second, and battling on.

Down at last. Here in the hollow between the slopes, the wind raged less fiercely than above.

"Harry!" she called.

She could hardly hear her own voice.

"Harry!" she shrieked.

But the wind swept the word from her lips, and its sound was soft as a sigh.

If she could only see! She put up her hand and rubbed her eyes. The lashes were wet with freezing sleet. Her hair was one stiff, matted mass. Her feet ached with the sharp, biting cold. She tried to pray.

"Dear Heaven, Baby Harry! Oh, dear Heaven, Baby Harry!"

That was all she uttered.

All at once she stumbled over something—something scarlet in the snow. Eagerly she grasped it. She dragged it up to her breast. She wrapped, as best her cold hands could, the shawl around it. Dead? Oh, no, no! She could feel the shivering pressure of the little limbs as she cuddled them to her.

Oh, for strength to reach home! Or would they both freeze, and die down here, and be buried in the snow?

A heavy burden for her slight arms, for her freezing hands, the sturdy baby she carried; a burden made still heavier by his present semi-stupor. She gripped her numb fingers around him. She bent her head. Beaten, swayed, buffeted, she made her way up the slope. She reached the level. She could not go much farther. Her hold of the child was relaxing. He was slipping from her, or so she fancied. The bitter, bitter cold! her very heart was paining with it. Her whole slender, unprotected body was racked with its agony.

Was that the house? Directly before her something dark had loomed up. She tottered against it. A haystack. At its base she sunk exhausted. One step farther would be simply a physical impossibility. Tighter she wrapped Harry in the shawl, and held him to her. Then, with her back against the haystack, her head bowed forward, her face hidden, she crouched there in torture, which drifted into drowsiness—drowsiness that was deadly as delicious!

"Harry!"

That was the first word she said, endeavouring to say, when the long, wretched delirium of fever was over at last. Where was she? Not out on the moor! Not in that awful white whirlwind! Not at the foot of the haystack! Surely this was her mother's room! Surely she was in her mother's bed. The brilliant patchwork quilt, she knew that.



The fire of peat on the hearth smelled familiar. And the voice was her mother's. She could not dream a voice.

"He is well, darling, safe and well. Hush! you must not talk yet."

When she woke again the doctor was standing by the bed, and just behind him was Harry's wee, rosy, roguish face.

"You will be better soon now," the doctor said, "though it is a wonder you lived. You were unconscious when your father found you on his return from town."

Just then her father came in. He said very little, but he stroked tenderly the thin hand on the counterpane.

"And—Harry?"

"He was not much the worse, thanks to you. You had him well protected. Come here, Harry."

He lifted the little chap on the bed. She smiled as she felt the clasp of the small, strong arms.

"Is it—snowing—still?"

The doctor laughed.

"Dear child, it is May," he said.

She looked bewildered.

"It was an awful storm," he went on; "the worst ever known in the country. The papers were full of it. Many perished. Some people were very brave and unselfish, and saved the lives of others. Their deeds, at least those that came to public knowledge, were praised all through the country. Yours was as grand as any. You are a heroine, Daisy."

He was a young man, a good-looking man. "A good doctor," averred the country people, among whom he had elected to practice. It had taken the exercise of all his skill to save Daisy Brown's life, and now he felt correspondingly elated.

"Oh, no!" said Daisy, very slowly and seriously; "I thought no one could be a heroine in Yorkshire."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Dr. Earl, and he looked gravely at the wan sweet face on the pillow.

"Besides," she went on, meeting his glance with that quiet, direct convincing gaze she had, and with just a flicker of rose-bloom coming into her cheeks, "heroines do something very wonderful, and I—I only did my best!"

That was two years ago. Daisy is eighteen now, and taller, healthier and prettier than ever. She and her mother are busy sewing; for this year there is to be a wedding in the old farm-house. When it is over Daisy Brown will be Mrs. Dr. Earl. If they were fashionable people Harry would be pressed into service as a page. But as they are not anything of the sort, he will figure in the important ceremony merely as a boy in a new corduroy suit and blue silk necktie; a boy who possesses a fond pride in his sister, and a tremendous appreciation of wedding-cake.

CONTRARY to popular belief, Franklin was not the originator of the lightning rod. The first lightning catcher was not invented by the great philosopher, but by a poor monk of Seuttenberg, Bohemia, who put up the first lightning rod on the palace of the curator of Preditz, Moravia, June 15, 1754. The name of the inventive monk was Prokop Dilwisch. The apparatus was composed of a pole surmounted by an iron rod, supporting twelve curved branches and terminating in as many metallic boxes filled with iron ore, and enclosed by a wooden box like cover, traversed by 27 iron-pointed rods, the bases of which found a resting-place in the ore box. The entire system of wires was united to the earth by a large chain. The enemies of Dilwisch, jealous of his success, excited peasants of the locality against him, and, under the pretext that his lightning rod was the cause of the excessive dry weather, had the rod taken down and the inventor imprisoned. Years afterwards M. Melsen used the multiple-pointed rod as an invention of his own.

## A CRUEL SILENCE.

—10:—

### CHAPTER XV.

LORD ROSSMOOR told his wife afterwards that he believed the memory of that day would haunt him all the rest of his life, but at the time he had no misgivings, no presentiment of evil.

He believed his unhappy sister was entirely under the influence of her maid, and that Ellen Fenn, instead of being the faithful servant they all believed, would prove to have long been a very black sheep indeed.

He anticipated a sharp struggle with Lady Mary before he convinced her of her favourite's guilt; but he thought she could not dispute the evidence of the silver dagger, and that in the end she would yield to his advice, and go home with him to the Abbey, whilst her husband got rid of Fenn, and put the household on a more comfortable footing.

The large door was locked, but the key was lying on the ground at a little distance. Lord Keith picked it up hastily, a strange pain at his heart.

Things must surely be very bad if Ellen Fenn actually locked her mistress in her own apartments before she went downstairs to meals.

Of course, the key being dropped was an oversight. It was usually in Fenn's pocket. The Earl understood how much this one little circumstance might have done to alienate Lady Mary from her family.

The door locked and Fenn taking her own pleasure, Molly—ay, and her father too—might come time after time to try for admittance quite unknown to the poor nervous invalid.

Lord Rossmoor let himself into the north wing—as it was called—and carefully locked the door after him, resolved that Ellen Fenn should not disturb his interview with his sister.

He had never been in this portion of the house before, but he had gathered from Molly that her mother's boudoir was the last room but one of the suite, and opened immediately into her bedroom. So he walked steadily on, wondering not a little how any man of Mr. Pennington's common sense could let his wife shut herself up in four "sound-proof" rooms at one end of his house! Every blind was lowered, as though to shut out the beautiful sunshine, and the rooms in semi darkness.

Lord Rossmoor did not wonder at his sister's low spirits; he himself felt unusually depressed as he made his dreary progress.

At last he gained the boudoir, and saw his sister reclining on the sofa. He only knew what strange fears had troubled him by the intense relief it gave him to see her there.

"Mary! I have come to pay you a little visit!"

"Rossmoor!" she started up, with a brilliant colour dyeing her faded face. Then she grew paler than before, and almost tottered back to her sofa.

"Come, come, Mary! There's nothing to be frightened at!" said the Earl, reassuringly.

"How did you get here?" she faltered.

"Walked in, of course. I told Pennington I was coming up for a chat with you. What a good fellow he is, Mary. I declare I never knew how much there was in him till the last few weeks!"

"Did he send you here? Oh, heavens! has he found it out after all these years?"

Lord Rossmoor was essentially practical, kind-hearted to the very core, but with a great fund of common sense.

"Come, come, Mary," he said, in a soothing way, as though she had been a child. "What should Pennington send me here for? If you came to the Abbey do you think I should demand who had sent you? Aren't we brother and sister, my dear?"

"But—"

"You're nervous, my dear!" he said, kindly.

"As to finding out anything, I suppose your maid has told you there was an attempted robbery here last night, and the housekeeper is badly hurt. Pennington came over with the news lest Molly should hear an exaggerated account. Of course we shall not let the child come home till things are straight again, and my wife said I was to bring you back with me."

"I cannot go!"

"Why not, my dear? Your husband wishes it, and so do we all."

"I am not used to visiting."

"You've shut yourself up here till you fancy you're Molly's grandmother instead of her mother. Come, Mary, you must rouse yourself—for your husband's sake."

She trembled like an aspen leaf.

"It is for his sake I have done it; his and Molly's! Oh, Rossmoor, if they ever find it out I shall kill myself!"

"Rubbish!" cried the Earl, heartily. "You're not such a coward. Now, Mary, perhaps you'll tell me plainly what you mean? How in the world can it benefit Molly and her father for you to shut yourself up here? And what secret are you keeping?"

The poor lady wrung her hands.

"Oh, have I betrayed it? Rossmoor, have pity and don't tell Cornelius. I could never look into his face again!"

"You have betrayed nothing," said her brother, holding her shaking hand clasped in both of his; "and I'll promise you not to tell Cornelius anything that will vex him, but in return you must do something for me. Just answer this one question. What burden is on your mind?"

"I dare not tell you!"

"Then, my dear, I must speak to your husband, and together no doubt we shall discover it. I conclude Fenn is in your confidence?"

"Fenn will never betray me!"

"Because you have bribed her heavily to keep the secret; but Mary, Ellen Fenn is in our power. The weapon with which poor Mrs. Ward was stabbed last night is the silver dagger our father gave you thirty years ago! My dear, only you or your maid could have possession of that. I will not think such a cruel thing of my sister as to believe she would stab her husband's trusted servant in the darkness of the night."

Lady Mary gave a kind of choked sob.

"I never did it, Rossmoor. I liked Mrs. Ward, but Fenn was angry about her coming because she had the housekeeping purse, and I could get her no more money."

"Now listen, Mary. To-night Fenn will be in prison, and to save herself will certainly betray your confidence! Don't you think it would be less painful for you if you told me now? My dear, don't be afraid of blame. I can see how much you have suffered. All through your married life you have carried the burden of this miserable secret. Now, confide in me, and I will help you."

"I dare not!"

Lord Rossmoor felt his patience ebbing.

"Listen, Mary. For the honour of our house I shall buy the secret of Fenn, who would sell her soul for gold. In a few hours at the furthest I shall know all. Can't you bring yourself to trust me, and save me the humiliation of bribing a dishonest maid-servant?"

"Fenn is not dishonest!" said Lady Mary, sorrowfully. "She helped me long ago, and we have been bribing her brother ever since to keep the secret! Every penny of her wages, every shilling I could spare, it has taken! Why, Rossmoor, I have even robbed my husband, and used the money given me for tradespeople to silence this cruel man!"

Lord Rossmoor believed Fenn and her brother went partners in the spoils, but it was not necessary to say so. Still holding her sister's hand he begged her to trust him.

"You will turn against me, Rossmoor! I have taken one life and blighted another! I am no better than a murderer!"

"You are my mother's daughter, Mary

"Only trust me, and I promise I will not reproach you."

And then at last, the poor, broken-spirited woman, who had lived in slavery to her own maid for more than twenty years, took courage, and sobbed out her story. Lord Rossmoor listened in speechless horror. It seemed to him he could never hold up his head again for very shame.

It seemed Lady Mary had really loved Kenneth Chetwynd, just as her sister-in-law suspected. The haughty beauty who was used to find all men her slaves, had believed she could win the only heart she craved. She mistook (wilfully) Kenneth's simple courtesy for a far warmer feeling; and when, at length, the young banker brought home his girl-bride, she swore a bitter oath to be revenged on them both.

Unhappily the instrument was ready to her hand. The maid Ellen Fenn, who was her confidante and adviser, had a twin brother employed as porter at the bank. This man, with wonderful cunning, contrived that Kenneth Chetwynd should be called away in urgent haste at the moment he was locking up Lord Rossmoor's securities in the iron safe to which no one but himself had access. He was gone only two minutes, but he left the key in the safe.

He believed the room empty during his brief absence, but Daniel Fenn was there, and had swiftly opened the safe, and taken the topmost parcel of papers. That very night it was given to his sister, who passed it on to Lady Mary, Daniel Fenn receiving in exchange a roll of bank-notes, and emigrating to a distant colony.

It was some months before the loss was discovered, and Kenneth never even remembered his momentary absence. Speaking to his solicitor he declared most positively that he placed the securities in the iron safe, and that the key had never left his possession.

It was this admission that ruined him. The bank proved no one had a duplicate key, and that the safe was never under the charge of anyone else. The verdict was a foregone conclusion, and the sentence of penal service for life did not strike anyone as severe.

Poor Lord Rossmoor! What a moment of agony for him as he listened to his sister's confession! He had to recall how Mr. Pennington, remembering what he owed to his partner's uncle, had offered to refund the money and let Chetwynd go scot free (dissolving the partnership, of course), and that he (Rossmoor) had insisted on the law taking its course, and all the while a woman of his own family was the thief!

It said much for his generosity, still more for his kindly heart that he was able to keep his promise, and utter not one word of reproach to his sister.

It seemed from Lady Mary's statement that she repented bitterly before the trial, and would gladly have restored the securities, but Fenn insisted that to do so would be to confess her own guilt.

The death of Kenneth's poor young wife the very day the sentence was pronounced, the life-long imprisonment of the unfortunate man himself, almost broke Mary Keith's heart; and when she married the banker it was chiefly that she fancied, as his wife, she should have an opportunity of, in some secret manner, replacing the fatal papers.

Never was idea more mistaken. The Lady Mary Pennington had no more to with her husband's business concerns than any other aristocratic matron. She once expressed a wish to go over the bank premises, and it was promptly granted, but that one brief visit convinced her how fruitless was her scheme. She had no more chance of restoring the securities to their iron safe or of putting them in some hiding-place where they could be accidentally "found" than she had had as Mary Keith.

Cornelius proved a generous husband, and but for her terrible secret, her ever present burden of remorse, she might have been a

happy wife; but these two barriers were always dividing her from him.

Later on there arose another trouble. The maid Fenn gradually became a thorn in her side. Her applications for money became so frequent, that, to satisfy her, Lady Mary stooped to rob her husband.

Daniel returned from the Antipodes, and was always extorting fresh bribes. Poor Lady Mary honestly believed he was the only gainer, and that his sister was a fellow-sufferer with herself.

Lord Rossmoor had listened in perfect silence until she paused for breath, then he asked, gravely,—

"Mary, where are those securities now?"

"In the secret drawer of my desk. Fenn believes I threw them away. I had to let her think so, Rossmoor, or she would have persuaded me to give them to her brother to ensure his silence."

"There is no doubt now who the man was who ransacked Pennington's library last night. It must have been Daniel Fenn!"

No answer.

"And his sister admitted him. Mary, my dear, do be frank with me. Where was Fenn last evening?"

"I don't know."

"Was she with you?"

"I don't know."

"Mary," reproachfully, "you must know!"

Lady Mary pushed up the sleeve of her dress and revealed her once beautiful white arm. From the wrist, half-way to the elbow, there was hardly an inch of flesh which did not show signs of recent puncture.

Lord Rossmoor started back in horror. He understood then all his sister's "strangeness," all about her "bad days," and her shutting herself up apart from husband and child. She was a morphia drinker, or rather consumer! It was impossible to say to what extent she had injected the insidious drug.

She was his sister, the only daughter of his parents—after his wife and children his nearest kindred. Lord Rossmoor was a proud man, but his bitter grief for his sister's spoils and wasted life exceeded even the shame with which her confession had filled him.

"I must speak to Pennington," he said slowly. "Some compact must be made with that wretched woman, and she shall be sent off out of Westerton. We cannot prosecute her for last night's crime; we cannot try to get back any of the large sums you have paid her lest she should proclaim your secret. Mary, tell me one thing—Molly has no suspicion."

"None; Fenn wanted her married, because she said there must be a great deal of money spent then, and I could get some of it for her brother."

"But you did not tell Molly?"

"I told her once she must marry Keith—your son. I told her it would save me from disgrace, but the child looked at me with dazed eyes. I am sure she did not understand. Rossmoor, don't be angry. I never meant to bring sorrow on Keith. Only he was so brave and true, I felt if he wedded my child she would be safe, whatever happened."

"There is no girl I would welcome as a daughter more gladly than Molly!" replied the Earl kindly; "but my boy has no thought of love or marriage."

Lady Mary lay back trembling. In spite of the pain and humiliation of her confession, a wonderful relief had come to her. Rossmoor was so brave and strong, surely he would be able to save her from the consequences of her sin!

"I must go to your husband," said the Earl gravely. "Mary, there is one question you must answer. Did you give the silver dagger to Ellen Fenn?"

"No, but it is always on my writing-table. She could easily have taken it. Rossmoor, you promised me not to tell my husband."

The Earl started. Had he promised it? If so he must fulfil his pledge, but it seemed to him better by far to trust Cornelius.

"He would not be hard on you Mary, and he already suspects there is a secret."

Lady Mary looked at him searchingly.

"You may tell him to-morrow," she said slowly, "not to-day; and when Mr. Giles comes to see Mrs. Ward I wish you would bring him here. I feel so very ill."

Lord Rossmoor promised, and went downstairs. Benson told him his master was engaged with the detective from London. Mr. Giles was paying a second visit to the house-keeper, and would soon pass through the hall.

"I want him to see your lady. She seems to me terribly upset," said the Earl.

"Lady Mary does not like Mr. Giles," said Benson dubiously. "She always says he does not understand her attacks, and that Fenn knows just what to do for her; but here he comes, my lord!"

Lord Rossmoor knew the surgeon well; and, after a courteous greeting, asked him to come to see his sister.

"Does Lady Mary wish it?" asked Mr. Giles, rather constrainedly.

"Yes. She asked me to bring you."

"It is some months now since I saw your sister, Lord Rossmoor. The last time I was called in to her I ventured to hint at the true cause of her ailments, and she dismissed me at once."

"You mean—morphia?"

The surgeon bowed.

"I have warned her repeatedly the practice was dangerous, and could have but one end. Six months ago it had gained on her terribly, and now—"

The surgeon paused, and a strange inspiration came to Lord Rossmoor, and he said, simply,—

"And now it is too late to save her! But she wishes to see you, and I know you will not refuse her request. She said just now she felt very ill. Giles, it has just flashed upon me she meant she was dying!"

They were only just in time. They could bear, as they entered the boudoir, two voices raised, one in coarse, passionate abuse, the other in meek, despairing protest.

Ellen Fenn stood over her mistress taunting her. The Earl rushed forward, and put one hand round his sister.

"Never mind, Mary, we know the truth now. In an hour or two you shall be free of her!"

She smiled faintly. The maid turned to him mockingly.

"It's penal servitude she'll get, my lord, if you interfere between us!"

Mr. Giles looked bewildered. Neither of the disputants noticed him.

"I believe the punishment for manslaughter and attempted murder is pretty heavy!" returned Lord Rossmoor. "We know now who stabbed Mrs. Ward, so beware!"

A moment's silence. A strange change had crept over Lady Mary's face.

Mr. Giles held a glass of wine to her lips, but she motioned it away.

"You'll tell Cornelius not to visit it on Molly?" she said, feebly. "She will be more to him than I have ever been! Ask him to forgive—"

The sentence was never finished. Lady Mary fell back exhausted, as they thought. It was only when the surgeon placed one hand on her heart, and could not feel its beat, that they knew the truth—she was dead!

There, with his sister's lifeless form before him, Lord Rossmoor had to decide his course.

Recalling every word of her sad confession, he felt convinced that Mary's death had cut the knot of her entanglement.

Ellen and Daniel Fenn might threaten much, but they could prove nothing now that their victim was gone.

He would offer the woman freedom from arrest for last night's outrage in return for holding her tongue. It was a strange bargain—silence for silence!

Mr. Pennington marvelled at the length of the Earl's conference. The detective had gone out into the grounds to consider over the



chance of the burglars getting in without assistance from one of the household.

The time seemed almost endless to the busy head of Westerton Bank until at last, slowly, sorrowfully, with a troubled look on his kindly face, Lord Rosemoor entered.

"What a time you have been! How is Mary? Will she see me if I go up?"

Poor Lord Rosemoor! He told his wife afterwards he had to blurt it out, he could not deal his blow slowly.

"Mary is dead!"

"Dead!"

"Bear it as well as you can, my friend!" said the Earl, brokenly. "She died without any pain. Your name was the last on her lips! She prayed that Molly might be more to you than her mother had ever been!"

"But she wasn't ill! Was it the fright of last night?"

"The actual cause was an altercation with Ellen Fenn; but Giles (who was there) says he warned her months ago she was in danger!"

"But what was it?"

Lord Rosemoor shuddered.

"Mortified! No wonder you asked me if there was madness in the family! Cornelius, true friend and brother, you must not sorrow for my sister, but try to rejoice that after life's fatal fever she sleeps well!"

"That woman killed her!"

"I confess Mary's infatuation for her gave her complete ascendancy over her, but kill her she did not! Fenn has left the house, and I don't think you will ever see her again!"

"But the outrage last night? You said, yourself, when you saw the silver dagger, it must have been Fenn who stabbed Mrs. Ward?"

"And I believe it was; but there are some things it is best to leave to time—some mysteries it is dangerous to unravel. Reward the detective, and send him back to London. Believe me, with Fenn's absence, peace will return to Brightwood, and as soon as ever my poor sister is buried shut up the house, and come to stop with us."

Mr. Pennington put one hand to his head.

"I can't believe it, Rosemoor. My wife dead! Molly without a mother!"

"She has been motherless in all but name for months. Believe me, Pennington, if ever death was not to be regretted it is poor Mary's. Think of her kindly. Teach your child to do the same, but never wish her back in life."

The banker looked up quickly.

"I begin to understand. You know her secret?"

"I do. Her one wish was to keep it from you. It was one wrong thing she did long years ago, before ever she became your wife."

Mr. Pennington gave one quick glance of comprehension; then he said, sadly,—

"I see it all. She stole your securities, and Ellen Fenn helped her. Lord Rosemoor, tell me how I am to shield my wife's memory, and yet restore poor Kenneth Chetwynd to freedom?"

But the Earl was not ready with an answer. To him to solve the problem seemed impossible.

## CHAPTER XVI.

ABRAHAM NEWTON was delighted with Ivy. He had never suffered himself to form dreams of what his heiress should be like, but the moment he caught sight of the slight, fragile-looking girl his whole heart went out to her.

"I'm only a plain, hard-headed man of business," he said to her that evening, when they were sitting alone in the pretty drawing-room of the villa at Sydenham; "but I want you to be happy, dear. The Misses Martin may be good women. I dare say they are, but they seem to me a trifle gloomy. I doubt you've had too much shadow in your life, my child, and now I'd like the sunshine to begin."

Ivy looked at him with a grateful smile,

and the doubt hovering on her lips found words.

"Are you quite sure I am your niece?" she asked, shyly. "I can't explain it to you, but Aunt Laura was so strange about my coming to you, and you know both my aunts thought me such a burden I can't help wondering why they didn't write to you long ago if they could possibly have made out I had any claim on you."

"You are Katherine's child!" said the Nabob, kindly, "and she was the very last of my kindred. It seems she sailed for Australia, and left you in her sisters-in-law's care."

"I always thought she died when I was born, but my aunts would never talk about her. They always said it was a sad subject."

Mr. Newton told her the story just as he had heard it from Miss Martin.

Ivy's clear eyes filled with tears.

"If only they had told me," she said, regretfully, "if they had let me grow up knowing even so much of my history; but, Uncle Abraham, they never mentioned my mother's name. They would never speak of her and my father; they seemed as though they hated the very subject."

"Strange women!" replied Mr. Newton; "but we are free of them now, I think; and so, my little girl, I want you to tell me where we shall go to: I have this house for another month, but we need not stay here if you dislike it."

"I should like to stay!"

"You have been among brighter scenes than this lately, I hear. I can't think how those old ladies ever let you go visiting grand people!"

Ivy told the story of her visit to the Tregarthans very simply. She told of the fire, and how Lord Keith had saved her life at the extreme peril of his own.

"I should like to see him!" said Mr. Newton, heartily. "I should like to thank him. Life would have been dreary indeed for me if I had come home to find not one of my own flesh and blood remaining. I don't hope to keep you here, child. You are too bright and pretty to be spared long to your old uncle; but you'll save me a corner of your heart, Ivy, and let me feel I have some one belonging to me still?"

It was just three days after this conversation that Lord Keith's card was brought to Mr. Newton. The old gentleman, who had never found time to think of love-making on his own account, had not lost his interest in it, and guessed Harold's errand at once.

"I'm proud to see you," he and he wrung Lord Keith's hand till it ached. "Do you know, my lord, you have saved for me the only creature I have a right to count kindred with? She's a good girl and a pretty one, and but for you she'd have been killed in a terrible manner. I'm only a plain man of business, Lord Keith, but you won't find me ungrateful."

Harold decided Ivy's present guardian was far more agreeable than Miss Martin.

"I hope, sir, you won't repent of your kind words when you know my errand here. I have learned to love Ivy as my own soul. Will you give your niece to me, Mr. Newton, and trust me to cherish her dearly?"

Poor Uncle Abraham looked thunder-struck.

"I never expected to keep her," he admitted, sadly; "but I didn't look for this. Why, I have only just found her, and here you are asking to take her away!"

"I know I must seem a robber, but I am not asking your permission to marry her at once. So that you will receive me as Ivy's future husband I am quite content. But I want to feel that she is my promised wife; I want to know that I have the right to stand between her and all sorrow."

"I see. I don't know much about young people, Lord Keith; but Ivy has spoken of you, and by her manner I don't fancy you will need to complain of her answer. But what will your

people say? Remember, I am nothing but a plain Anglo-Indian. I don't believe there ever was a fashionable person in our family. Why, my own father and Ivy's great-grandfather was a foundling!"

Harold smiled.

"I am that melancholy thing—an only son. We are not rich—indeed, for our station, we are very poor; but my father is very proud of his old name. He is so afraid of its dying out that he has left me free to choose my own wife. He has so despaired of a daughter-in-law that he will be only too thankful to hear my wedding bells."

"Well, your gain will be my loss, but there is a sort of fitness in the child's belonging to you, since you saved her life. You'll find her in the drawing-room, Lord Keith, and though I would fain keep her for myself I don't deny you have more right to her."

"Ivy!"

He had parted from her not knowing of his freedom, fearing that perhaps a long and painful contest would have to be fought ere he could offer her his hand. And now, lo! in less than a week, all was changed! The barrier between them was removed.

The woman who might have parted them lay sleeping in the cemetery at Bourne-mouth. His terrible punishment was ended, and he might boldly claim the girl he loved.

"Ivy!"

"I thought you would come."

He had taken the little hand in his. He sat down on the sofa and put one arm round her. It was the happiest moment of his life, and yet there was a strange agitation in his manner, a terrible fear at his heart.

His happiness seemed too great, too perfect. He felt as though some cruel hand would dash the cup of bliss from his lips.

"Sweetheart," said Lord Keith, simply, "I am come to claim your promise. You said I should find you waiting. Ivy, will you cast in your lot with mine, and promise to give yourself to me?"

There was no hesitation, no coquetry in her reply. Ivy was incapable of either.

"Are you sure it is not pity?" she asked, sadly. "Is it possible, Lord Keith, you really care?"

"So much, my Ivy, that life would be but a blank affair without you. Dear, I should have spoken to you days ago, but there was, as I hinted to you at Dalbury, a dark shadow between us. I dared not tell you all I felt!"

"Was it your parents' anger? They might well object to your choosing a little village girl."

Harold took her hand in his. He had resolved to tell her the truth.

"It was nothing of that sort, sweetheart. Through a moment's folly, three years ago, I gave myself—the lawyers told me—a wife. I never saw her afterwards. I never touched her hand, and yet they said while she lived I was bound!"

Ivy had grown white to her very lips.

"You have a wife?"

"I had," said Harold, simply, "but she is dead. It was a miserable business, darling! I never loved her nor she me, but I should like you to try and think as kindly of her as you can, since she is dead."

"Please tell me about her."

He told the story from first to last. He omitted nothing. Ivy listened with averted face.

"If I had taken the lawyer's advice I should have appealed at once for my freedom. But ours is an old name, and I shrank from the publicity. I said I could live through my life without love. It was not till I went to the Tregarthans and met you that I realised my mistake."

"And she is dead! You are quite, quite sure?" asked Ivy, anxiously. "It is not that you have made the law set you free, because I do not think that would make any difference. To my mind, nothing in the world save death can part husband and wife."

"Ivy, dearest! Believe me, the unhappy



[ELLEN FENN STOOD OVER HER MISTRESS, TAUNTING HER!]

woman is in her grave. I saw her funeral. I am free by the laws of Heaven and man to ask for this little hand!"

"Do you know, Lord Keith, I can't help feeling sorry for her."

"She did not need your pity, dear!"

"But you never loved her! It must have broken her heart?"

"I don't think she had a heart to break. Ivy, I shall be sorry I told you my wretched story if it saddens you."

The girl's eyes had a strange, far-off expression in their depths.

"Do you know," she said, slowly, "it makes me feel guilty, and almost as though I had wronged her, by loving you."

"Then you do love me, dear?"

"Better than my life!"

Harold stooped and kissed her.

"Ivy, indeed, indeed you must not trouble yourself with such scruples. Don't let us talk of this any longer. Tell me, are you happy with Mr. Newton? Is he a kinder guardian than your aunts?"

"He is kinder than anyone could fancy, and I am quite happy now!"

Lord Keith understood the stress she half-unconsciously laid on the last word.

"You trusted me, didn't you, dear? You knew I should come back to you?"

She bowed her head.

"I felt you would come back, only I could not tell when. You had spoken of a shadow that might part us. I could not guess but that the shadow might last for years."

"When will you come to me, Ivy?"

But Ivy would not heed the question.

"I think Belle likes me," she said, wistfully, "but I dread your father and mother. They may have been very ambitious for you."

Harold was silent just a minute. He was thinking of Miss Laura Martin, and her assertion that Ivy could not marry Lord Rossmoor's son. Had the old maid had any reason for the strange speech? Was there

any link between Ivy's parents and his own?

"Do you know, Ivy, I had a great difficulty in getting your address. Your letter had been destroyed, and one of your aunts refused point-blank to tell me where you were. She declared you must not marry me because I was my father's son."

"Aunt Laura?"

"Yes, Ivy, have you ever heard your aunts speak of Westerton? Do you think it possible they can have been there at any time and conceived a dislike for my father? I cannot tell you how vehement Miss Laura was."

"She was just as vehement against my coming here. She said I should repent it all my days."

"Can you explain it?"

"It puzzled me very much. I thought at last perhaps Aunt Laura had suffered so much from being so poor that she disliked and distrusted anyone who was rich."

"But Mr. Newton is not rich?"

Ivy opened her eyes.

"He is enormously rich! He has more money than he knows what to do with!"

"Ivy! You don't mean that you are an heiress? I am glad I did not know it when I spoke to him. I might have feared he was thinking me a fortune-hunter, whereas I never thought you had a penny!"

"She will have a great many pennies," said Mr. Newton, who entered in time to hear the last words. "But I don't think you need feel distressed at that, Lord Keith. Money is very useful in this workaday world."

Keith smiled.

"Only I had always a fancy that my wife should owe everything to me. Mr. Newton, will you congratulate me? Ivy has promised to be mine!"

He went home with a light heart. It really seemed to Keith happiness had dawned on him at last! Looking through the vista of long years he saw Ivy his cherished wife, his parents' petted daughter, the mother of the

grandson Lord Rossmoor had so ardently desired. From these happy visions he was roughly disturbed as he entered his chambers, for his servant met him on the threshold with a letter, deeply bordered with black.

"It's the Earl's writing, my lord, and is marked 'urgent.' I should have taken it to you if I had known where you were."

Keith felt himself suddenly brought back to earth. His father's note was short and imperative. It had, like a telegram, neither beginning nor end.

"A terrible disaster! Come at once!"

And surely a more superstitious man than Harold Keith would have said that this abrupt summons, coming so soon after his betrothal, threatened some terrible calamity to him and Ivy.

(To be continued.)

If you happen to be a visitor at a Mexican "balle," quietly sitting on a bench, do not be surprised if some bewitching senorita with raven hair and roguish eyes trips lightly up to where you are sitting and unceremoniously smashes an egg over your head. This curious action is merely to show her preference for you and means an invitation for you to get up and dance with her.

Some persons believed that eggs laid on Good Friday were capable of extinguishing fires. It is easy to conceive that they would be carefully preserved in consequence. In Suffolk they are not supposed to possess this extraordinary power, but they are carefully preserved nevertheless. There it is held that a Good Friday egg will never go bad, and that a piece of such egg relieves the painful disorder of the bowels known as colic. Possessing such virtues, we cannot be surprised to learn that eggs laid on Good Friday do not form part of the ovarious meal peculiar to Easter morning.





[DARRELL HELD, FOR JUST THE REGULATION TIME, THE HAND DOLORES GAVE HIM.]

NOVELLETTE.]

## FOR SILK ATTIRE.

—30:—

## CHAPTER I.

"You're really engaged, Dolores!"

"You've got a real, live young man!"

"You'll never have a carriage and pair!"

In various ways, from three girls, all younger than beautiful, Spanish-looking Dolores, these remarks were uttered in the dining-room of a house in one of the roads turning off from Kensington High-street.

And Dolores, sitting on the table, laughed at the two first exclamations, and winced ever so little at the third. But she threw up her head the minute after.

"I don't see why not!" she said.

"Literary men don't make fortunes," said Amy, the youngest, who had made the remark that seemed to excite the most notice.

"Ernest ought to," said Ernest's bride-elect. "He's so clever, and he knows so many people!"

"Well," said Rose, next in age to the eldest, "somehow, I always fancied you'd make a rich match. Cousin Bertha so often has you at her swell parties. It's very kind of her, when I'm sure you outshine her!"

"You won't be able to go there and wear those lovely old pearls of mother's when you're married!" said Amy. "Then Rose will go."

"I shan't be married yet," said the young lady; "besides, I don't care about the pearls. Indeed, I can't wear them if I go to Bertha's Christmas ball. Everyone knows them."

"How lovely you would look in diamonds!" sighed the third girl, Juliet, for they were none of them jealous of the beauty—she reflected credit on the family. "Wouldn't she, Rose—a set, you know—all sparkling and flashing in the light!"

"Money's awfully nice," said Dolores, "and diamonds! I can't bear to look at them on other people sometimes. But," and a soft light came into her great oval black eyes, a rich colour to her velvety cheek, "I can't have diamonds and love too."

Rose, who was seventeen, thought the words too sweet for anything. Amy, who was fifteen, said, promptly,—

"No, you can't now, because you've gone and engaged yourself to a poor man instead of a rich one!"

"He's been pretty quick about it," said Juliet, laughing. "It isn't more than two months since we first knew him. I'm very glad, though. He's awfully nice, and too handsome for anything. What a pair you'll make, Dolores!"

"What does father say?" asked Rose, more seriously.

"He doesn't like it much," said Dolores, "but he gave in—mother the same. I think they're disappointed, and I don't blame them. You see, they thought I should do something brilliant, but," laughing merrily, "where is the rich man to come from? And now I don't care for him."

"Now you've got Donald, silk attire has lost its fascination," said Rose.

"Now I've got Donald," said Dolores, looking soft again. But she did not repeat nor echo in her heart her sister's closing words.

Mr. Magniac, the father of these girls, was very well connected, a barrister, with a tolerable practice, but who lived up to and over the hill.

He could not, even had he lived within his means, have expected to leave anything worth having. Neither he nor his wife would hear of the girls learning to keep themselves. They would marry, they said, though they did not see a great deal of society, and had only one relation in London who did.

And the first to get engaged was the flower of the family—and not to money, but to a literary man who was naturally, at six-and-

twenty, still in the struggle, and only hoped to be able to marry in a couple of years! It was disappointing, certainly.

"But I don't see how we can refuse," said Mr. Magniac, after he had told the girl's lover he would think about it. "He's an upright fellow, well-born, desperately fond of Dolores. A year or two to wait is nothing in the professional classes. I've not a single valid objection—except that he isn't rich!"

And neither of the Magniacs was worldly enough to actually thwart their daughter. They were negative—she might do as she liked. They let her see they were not exactly pleased, but no more.

When Ernest Darrell came for his answer they were not cold to him, but gracious. If they did the thing at all they would do it properly.

The young man, however, who was sensitive, knew that in their hearts his future father and mother-in-law were not too pleased that he had come in the way of Dolores. This did not disturb him, save as concerned his own pride. He had absolute confidence in Dolores, and her parents were too honourable to seek to deliberately undermine her faith.

"But they don't like it," he said, to the widowed sister, older than himself, with whom he lived in Bloomsbury. Clementina, otherwise Tina Leicester, was always in sympathy with her brother. "They were very kind, though. I suppose it is a disappointment. Dolores is beautiful enough for a princess!"

"She'll be much happier as your wife, my dear!" said Mrs. Leicester. "Is she handsomer than her mother? She takes after her, you say?"

"Her type comes from her mother's country, but Mrs. Magniac never was as lovely as Dolores. Though what is the use of my saying that?" he added, laughing. "You won't believe it. You must let me take you to call, then you will see for yourself."

"Very well. It's a long engagement, Ernest. I don't like that."

"Well Tina, you were engaged yourself for three years," was the retort. "I don't like it, but I can't take Dolores from the home she has to the only one I could give her just now. It is kinder to her to wait. I explained it all to her—and to her father too."

Mrs. Leicester, when she saw Dolores, straightway fell in love with her too—it was impossible to help it. The girl was so beautiful, and full of stately Spanish grace, she looked out of place in the modern house, somewhat shabby, and only remarkable for comfort.

She ought to have come out of one of those wonderful old Spanish palaces, or sat on its balcony, and talked to her lover below on her fan.

"I can talk a little on a fan," she said, one day when Darrell said that to her. "Mother told me I picked it up very soon!"

"I dare say. An example of heredity. I'm afraid, though, about the palace, you will never step out of one of my buyings. My profession doesn't make money fast enough. I'm going to try my hand at playwriting, Dolores. If I could only make a hit I'd get on faster."

"How impatient you are, Ernest!" she said, reproachfully.

"I can't help it, dearest. Look at the hours and hours I am away from you!"

"You come every day!" said the girl, teasing him.

They were by themselves in the big old-fashioned garden, for the weather was mild, and Dolores only needed a wrap over her shoulders.

"You, at the end of every day, and not quite that. It doesn't satisfy me; but I dare say I am unreasonable. A lover always thinks he can make a girl happier than her father and mother, who've made her happiness ever since she was born! And I worry you. When I am talking like that you look as if you didn't quite agree. Do I vex you?"

"No, Ernest, how could you? Only I think sometimes—"

He made her stop in the path they were walking in. The moonlight, shining fitfully through the tree branches above them, fell on the girl's exquisite face as she lifted it, and made it like some perfect marble carving. He drew her close to him, moved to a passionate tenderness by her beauty and her wistful, perplexed eyes, that drooped before the glow in his.

"Why do you hesitate?" he said. "What is it you think 'sometimes' that you shrink from saying?"

There was a faint blush on her cheek as she looked up again and then down. There was through all her earnestness a little soft coquetry which only made her more lovely, and he more than willing to keep her there and not press for an answer to his question.

"You won't be hurt?" she said.

"I can't tell, dear, except that I don't quite see what you could say to hurt me."

"Well, then, sometimes you frighten me, Ernest; you love me so much, as if I made all your life!"

"So you do, my heart—all my life, in truth. Why should that frighten you? You don't want me to love you in cool fashion?"

"No—but—oh, no! I couldn't bear that; but I don't think I give as much to you," and then, faltering, she hid her face.

He laughed softly, stooping to kiss her.

"Is that all? That doesn't make me afraid," he said, "even if it is true. Perhaps it isn't, really! And if it were? You are only eighteen, and I am six and twenty. That makes a difference. If you do give me just a little less, my Dolores, that is only something more for me to win—if not now, later, when you are my wife. One doesn't expect a girl to be a woman. So be comforted. There is your mother calling out to me not to keep you out here in the cold. Come in, and sing me some more of your Spanish ballads before I go."

And the girl was her bright self once again, singing the love-songs in the prettiest way,

now saucy, now sweet, and in the richest of voices. It was no wonder if, each time he saw her, Darrell felt as if he hadn't cared for her half enough before. But he came to fancy that, perhaps, she had been right about herself; and if it chilled him sometimes, it did not really disturb the happiness of this time. For a girl who was half Spanish to be wanting at all in fervour was odd; but "she is only eighteen," he would say, "she hasn't found out all her heart yet. I shall teach her to find it."

If Dolores had not yet arrived at the ripeness of her powers she had arrived, by the time the spring came, at formulating a misgiving that had once or twice flashed across her. She distinctly disliked the idea of the long waiting in this home, where there was never enough money, and she did not like looking at her future home, where love would be the richest thing to be found.

## CHAPTER II.

The season had just commenced when Cousin Bertha, otherwise Mrs. Saxton, drove round in her carriage and pair from her great house in South Kensington to Bellamy-street, to ask Dolores Magniac to come to her ball.

Dolores was wild with delight. What should she wear? She would want so many things. Would her father give her some money? She had spent hers.

"You are terribly extravagant for a girl who is going to marry a poor man!" said Mrs. Magniac.

She had always been in the habit of saying such things to Dolores, but the girl had scarcely noticed them till lately.

"The evening dress you had at Christmas will do with some fresh trimmings. You must wear flowers; you really can't be seen in those pearls again!"

In the midst of the consultation Ernest Darrell came in to fetch Dolores for a promised walk. Dolores began at once about the ball, speaking rapidly, and looking excited.

"Isn't it lovely?" she exclaimed, ecstatically, springing to Darrell, who smiled at her, although he felt rather shut out. Who else would like half so well to see her in all her bravery of lace and silk and flowers? and he was not going—did not even know Mrs. Saxton.

"Then you are going to cheat me of my walk?" he said; "or will you let me come with you when you buy these wonderful ribbons?"

"Will you? I thought you wouldn't care for it—shopping, you know."

"It's the being with you I shall like," said the young man.

And there was not a happier pair in London than those two as they walked over the park into Oxford-street, only their happiness was so different in its motives.

She was full of the ball—she went to balls so seldom, poor child!—picturing what it would be like, how often she would dance, whether her dress would look well!

The man at her side was a negative part of her enjoyment. His happiness came solely from her—herself and her sparkling delight.

"I wish you were coming," she said, as they came to the shop she wanted.

"My not coming mustn't interfere with your pleasure," said Darrell. "And, Dolores, don't get your gloves. Tell me what shade you want, and I'll bring you those—and your flowers."

"Oh! Ernest, that's so good of you, but I don't think I ought to let you."

"I think I shall do it," said Ernest, laughing; "there isn't any question of letting me."

And he had his way, as he must with any girl, the making of these gifts being amongst his privileges; but most of all with a girl like Dolores, who loved pretty things, and the being made somebody.

There wasn't a girl in the ball-room who had

more exquisite flowers than she, for it's astonishing that, however poor a man may be, he finds money somehow to give his lady love gifts apparently beyond his means.

Her gloves were a pleasure to any woman; and the girl felt her heart swell as she saw every eye, whether male or female, directed towards her in the brilliant rooms.

It did not matter to her that her cousin partly had her as an attraction. The girl liked to attract, and, above all things, she loved glitter and circumstance—the things that wealth can buy, the power that wealth can give.

She stood with her lover's flowers in her hand—the flowers that he had put there himself, with a laughing admission not to flirt too much, and eyes that had no need to hide their admiration; but though the perfume of those flowers came up to her they brought no message with them.

She fancied the world was at her feet in this one ball-room out of thousands. She felt as if she could live for ever in dazzling light and eternal pleasure, with always jewels shining and soft music playing.

She did not think of satiety—she did not believe there was such a thing. How could you tire of beauty and light and homage? she would have said. You couldn't grow sick of gems when you could wear them every day; because your carriage is always at your call you wouldn't want to walk.

She did not know—and no one had ever taught her—that it is only love and faith and truth that never fail.

But it is natural to a girl who sees not much society, and feels she is born for it, to get a bit intoxicated at so brilliant a ball as this!

Ernest himself might have been pained at her forgetfulness of him, but he would not have blamed her. He would have said it was but a surface forgetfulness.

He did not know it, however, and there were a good many things deep down in this undeveloped narrow soul of Dolores that he did not know.

"I hope you're enjoying yourself, Dolores!" said Cousin Bertha, amiably, as she paused by the sofa where the girl sat between the dances.

Dolores was under her chaperonage, and she felt bound to look after her.

"Don't get your card filled up, remember!"

"Why not?" said Dolores. "I'm engaged pretty deep."

"That's never wise," said Bertha. "You never know who may come later you want to dance with."

"I daresay; but you see they are all alike to me, so long as they dance well," said the girl, laughing.

"Oh, of course! I forgot you were an engaged young lady. Did he bring you those flowers? They're the loveliest in the room. I suppose you know something of their cost?"

"A good deal, I believe!" said Dolores, carelessly. "The cost doesn't matter—it's the gift—and the giver!"

"Oh yes, certainly!" said Bertha. "Remember what I told you. The most ridiculous thing in the world," she said, as she passed on, "to let that girl throw herself away as she is doing. She is the most perfect success. She would be a queen of society if she had only the chance! She'll never get the chance as Ernest Darrell's wife, and she'll simply eat her heart out. I shall give her the chance; and here he comes! Sir Algernon," with a sweetly reproachful smile, "how late you are!"

The man addressed—rather tall and very good-looking—shook hands with the hostess, and said, smiling,—

"You must know it was not from choice. I've been dining with some friends, and they kept me. I hope your card is not quite filled up; if so, you have broken faith with me, for you promised me, at least, one dance the other night."

"I remember! No, my card isn't nearly



filled. I shall not dance much. Oh, I'm glad you've taken a quadrille, waltzing makes me giddy. I'll find you a partner if you'll come with me," said Bertha. "She's a lovely waltzer, which will just suit you."

And the next minute Sir Algernon was bowing before Dolores Magniac, while Bertha stood chatting for a few seconds, then excused herself on the score of her duties, and moved away.

She gave no significant look to Dolores, or sign of any sort, to intimate her line of conduct—she was too wise.

"I suppose you haven't a single dance left?" said Sir Algernon, presently. "I'm afraid I'm too late!"

"I really don't know," said Dolores, in the tone that implies, "so many have come I really can't recall them all." "I daresay I have some vacancies!"

He took the card, and found it pretty full. The first vacant dance was a waltz, and he put his initials against that.

"Mrs. Saxton," he said, "gives you a good character as a famous waltzer!"

"I love it!" said Dolores, fervently; and when she was very much in earnest her clear cheek glowed with the richest, softest colour that made her look ten times more brilliantly beautiful.

She was the sort of girl to lose your head and your heart about at first sight, as Ernest Darrell had; and if Sir Algernon Lookwood did not go quite so far as that, being of a cooler temperament, it seemed to him the easiest of operations.

He came for his dance with a subdued eagerness that flattered the girl's vanity and love of conquest. She knew as well as possible he had been longing for the time to pass quickly so that he might be with her. She woke suddenly, as it were, to the suspicion—a dangerous one for her—that she could twist any man round her finger.

In the very insouciance of conscious power she tried how far she could exercise it without much effort.

She had a dozen smiles at command for all his pretty speeches—and nobody in London knew better how to flirt in the most perfect way than Sir Algernon—each more winking than the other. She knew exactly when to veil her lovely dark eyes under their black fringe of lashes—when to lift them, sometimes half-sleepily, sometimes with a sudden flash of brightness. She hardly spoke a word.

It was very naughty, of course, and her conscience pricked her, but it was great fun, and half of it just a girlish escapade. She was partly ignorant of her own capacity to enslave senses and heart—at least, she was when she began. She was not so ignorant when she went home that night.

As to her dancing she seemed to float, and was perfectly tireless.

"I could go on for ever!" she said, thinking of the waltz.

"I know I could," said Sir Algernon, bending a glance on her which said plainly it wasn't the waltz alone, by any means.

"I'm afraid you can't, then," said the girl, with a roguish smile, "for it's over."

"But it's in your power not to turn me into outer darkness," said he, eagerly. "Give me another chance later!"

Dolores hesitated.

"I really don't think I can," said she.

"Miss Magniac, don't be cruel. I didn't think it was in you. May I have your card and look?"

And when she had reduced him to almost impatience of her dallying, she let him have her card, and consented to go and have an ice.

Bertha, seeming everywhere and nowhere in particular, never lost sight of her cousin. She was full of admiration.

"She is doing capitally!" she thought. "That girl is a born sovereign! How perfectly she does it all! That poor Sir Algernon, he's simply fascinated! But if I were Dolores' lover I should look after her. Hap-

pily, he isn't here, and I didn't intend he should be. I dare say he thinks her immaculate."

The girl went home with her head in a whirl. She had been the most sought after girl in the room, and she knew it; she could have danced every dance had she chosen. There wasn't a man who had been her partner once who wouldn't have given his head, if he had had two, to dance with her again; and she could bring Sir Algernon Lookwood to her feet if she chose.

"But I don't choose," said the young beauty. "I'm going to tell Ernest how naughty I've been, and be forgiven, and be good. He won't scold me—he can't."

She had known that of him always—now she knew it of every man. And so, when he came the next day to hear if she had enjoyed the ball, she told him of her delinquencies with the utmost outward penitence, and the most assured inward confidence. She wasn't true, therefore, through and through; but he only thought how lovely she looked with each change in the mobile face; and then the delicate hands were playing with his coat and the flower in his button-hole, and he was watching those, finding the penitent so witching that the confession mattered little.

Her soul was touched by that indulgence of his, and love. It was with real sorrow that she said, not venturing to lift her eyes, but keeping them intent on that flower he wore,—

"I was very wrong. You're not angry, are you, Ernest?"

At which he captured the restless hands and kissed them.

"You foolish child," he said, tenderly, "did you imagine I could be angry about a bit of girlish fun?"—for, somehow, Dolores had softened down her coquetry. "Only, sweetheart, you should be merciful."

Perhaps Dolores felt dimly that there was more in her heart than she had confessed; perhaps she was faintly conscious of hidden springs of her "girlish fun," that the man would have thought it sacrilege to dream of. Perhaps she felt vaguely at cross-purposes. Whatever it was, she startled him by suddenly beginning to cry, with her soft, dark face pressed against him. Darrell drew her close.

"My precious child," he whispered, "there is nothing to be unhappy about. I am not angry—won't you believe it?" and he could not understand why the girl quivered so. She only knew the passionate thought went through her—wasn't this love worth all the homage of last night? How she clung to him—how she treasured the soft words, how she answered love with love when she lifted her dark eyes to his!

"So you are happy again?" said Darrell, when he had won that smile from her. "You are so sensitive, my sweetest of Spanish flowers! What made you cry—what I said?"

"I don't know," the girl said, looking up to him again with a strange look—a dumb asking for help that he could not understand. But he read enough in it to make him press his lips on hers, thrilled to the soul he knew not why, giving out all his heart to her in that kiss—all he could give, of love, faith, utter trust.

She won love so easily from nobler than she was, even such love as this man yielded her, laying his whole soul at her feet. Would she come to hold love cheap?

She did not to day. For the time the dress was put on one side; and love, that had nothing but love to bestow, was to her precious.

Darrell told her presently that he had some chance of being sent by an influential paper, for which he did a lot of work, to Paris.

"What for?" said Dolores.

"To take up their French correspondence. The man they have is ill, and they know French is as familiar to me as English."

"I don't want you to go, Ernest."

"No? It might not be very long. It depends on how soon this poor fellow is ready for work. I don't think I ought to refuse it, Dolores. It's

well paid, and it's always best to oblige good employers if you can. I would write every day, if only a line. I shouldn't dare to ask as much of you."

"I think you dare as much as most men!" said Dolores, laughingly. "I don't know anything about the policy of accepting the offer. I never understand those things—I needn't, need I?"

"I like you to know my concerns, Dolores."

"Yes. Well, I'll try and make them out for the future then. Meanwhile you want to go, you are so fond of roving."

"So I am, and yet I don't like leaving you," said Darrell, reluctantly. "I wouldn't have accepted it without telling you first; but it isn't quite settled yet."

"I suppose you must go, then!" said Dolores.

She wasn't pleased or happy about it, purely for his sake to-day—afterwards a little for her own, but unconsciously.

He made her so completely first; she was his queen, whose whim was law. Where else would she get this that was a necessity to her?

Their wills had never really crossed. It had always been his place, as it were, to give way to the woman, to the weaker—a mere matter of inclination, where it had been a pleasure, after being coaxed, to follow her wish. So that Dolores had an idea that he would always be easy-going; and a little sweetness on her part, a little hanging about him, and looking as lovely as she could, would conquer him.

The matter was settled all in a rush, as these things often are. Without time for a line, Darrell came one afternoon in a haughty, announcing that he was to cross by that night's mail, and he had only a couple of hours to spare.

They all made the most of that time. There was tea to be had with Mrs. Magniac and the girls, and plenty of chaff, and nonsense, and laughter amongst the whole party.

"Nobody is going to be doleful," said Amy.

"Dolores may cry presently, but we shan't!"

"Dolores isn't going to be so silly," said the girl. "As if Paris were China, and a month a hundred years! Besides, I'd never send my mankind away downhearted."

"That's right," said Mrs. Magniac, approvingly, and the sole representative of mankind smiled.

After tea Dolores slipped away to the ramshackle room the girls called their own, and Darrell very soon followed her. There he told her a hundred particulars he had kept for her alone, making her a sharer in all his plans and hopes.

Then he talked of their future, of their home together, of how he would make her happy, and work for her; and Dolores listened and smiled, but contributed nothing herself, and did not feel her heart warmed.

She liked it better, even though the time was shortening, when he was silent—as he was bound to be in spite of his bravery—and she had not to look at a vision that, somehow, seemed bare.

Juliet put her head in.

"Ernest, mother says she's sent for a cab, and it'll be here directly!" she said, and ran out again.

"Then I must tear myself away," Darrell said, standing up and taking the girl in his arms. "Good-bye, my heart, think of me always, as I of you. Write often; it will bring you a little nearer to me."

Then he released her, and with her hand in his went to the door, then paused, and bent down to her, drawing her to him once more.

"One more kiss," he said, unsteadily. "No, not from me," as the girl lifted her face. "I want it from you—so—my darling—my life!" as the soft lips met his while he held her heart to heart.

That was their parting—for a month—for two, maybe. Who could foresee? or who knows what may happen when once there comes a break?

## CHAPTER III.

"I wish you would let Dolores come and stay with me a little while?" said Mrs. Saxton one day to Juanita Magniac. "She seems rather out of spirits. When will Mr. Darrell return?"

"I don't know. He's not been gone above a fortnight," answered Mrs. Magniac. "I am not sure it would be wise to let her stay with you, Bertha, though it is kind of you to wish it. If she is to marry a man who will not have a home on a grander scale than this, she had better not get unsettled."

"My dear Juanita, she comes to me for a week or two, and she won't be married for another year or two! If she does get a little unsettled, she will recover it at the first sight of her lover—if she cares for him. Are you reasonable?"

"You don't know Dolores very well," said Mrs. Magniac, quietly. "Yes, she cares a great deal for Ernest; but I'm sorry he ever came!"

"Dolores might have made a most brilliant match!" said Mrs. Saxton. "I can't imagine why you and her father consented to it!"

"You've no children, Bertha. If you had, you would understand what it is to have a girl declaring she'll never care for anyone else, looking miserable while the matter is being considered, and the young man asking for her as if it were his life that was in question. I like him very much, and Dolores is everything and everyone with him; but I do wish—"

"Yes, it's a great pity!" said Mrs. Saxton; "but in that case it can't possibly hurt a girl with any stability to have a little gaiety."

"No," Mrs. Magniac said, well-knowing that in one sense Dolores had not much stability; but she shut her eyes to the fact, and allowed the girl to go.

In Bertha's house Dolores was in a new world—and a world she loved.

Mrs. Saxton and her husband were, like their cousins the Magniacs, well-born and well-connected; but, unlike the Magniacs, they were wealthy, which enabled them to take a position that was theirs by right.

They knew lots of people, and the house was never empty save in the morning. People to luncheon, afternoon callers, guests at dinner; then opera, theatre, or party; or else they were themselves the guests in other houses. It was very pleasant in any case. Dolores revelled in it.

Sir Algernon Lookwood had the run of the house. He was rarely invited. He came when he liked, which was every day.

He was always devising some pleasure for Dolores, driving the ladies out, taking them here and there, bringing the girl anything she even spoke of passively as wishing for, and flowers constantly, till Dolores asked Bertha one day if she ought to accept them.

"Why not, my dear?" asked Bertha, with that smile that always makes a girl shy of opening her heart. Bertha was quite twelve years the elder.

"Well," said Dolores, colouring and hesitating, "I ought to think of Ernest; and Sir Algernon does not know I am engaged. It isn't quite fair!"

"Oh, my child, it really won't matter! He is as old as I am, a friend of the house; he can give you these trifles. And I dare say he does know you are engaged. He knows a lot of literary people, artists and actors, you know, and all the professional people," said Bertha, rather disparagingly.

"We're professional people ourselves," said Dolores, with indignation, at which Bertha laughed.

"Yes, dear, I know. I'm not ashamed of it. Well, make your mind easy about these little trifles of Sir Algernon's—the 'little trifles' were often costly enough. 'You ought to have a new dress for my dinner-party to-morrow. Do you think they can let you have it?'"

"I don't know," said the girl, dubiously.

"I'll see to it. I'll call on your mother, and we'll arrange it," said Bertha.

She was kind-hearted, as she knew it, and took a great deal of trouble about Dolores.

She managed it with Mrs. Magniac, who managed it with her husband. And not one of the three said, "We are trying to get Dolores off, to marry her to that rich Sir Algernon Lookwood!" but they all knew they were going to give the girl a chance.

Dolores was not blinded by Bertha's freedom as to present-giving. Sir Algernon was only four years older than Ernest Darrell—that difference not permitting him the privileges belonging to the absent betrothed. But the girl chose to accept the sanction of her elder, though she knew it was wrong.

She liked Sir Algernon—she did not love him. Instinctively she refrained from telling him of her engagement. She felt he would have been the last man to make himself another man's rival, and in that other's absence.

She was dazzled by the wealth, the position, the changeful life, the ease, the continual wearing of beautiful dresses, the incense of flattery ever ascending, that would be hers. For Sir Algernon let it be seen plainly that he would win Dolores if he could; and if he were less demonstrative and warm than Ernest Darrell he was excessively devoted, and, in a quiet way, always ready at hand.

At first, Dolores wrote long accounts of her doings to Paris, and got letters back expressing delight at her having so much pleasure, but never a doubt. She never mentioned Sir Algernon; and when the week went into a fortnight, and the fortnight into three weeks, the poor fellow in Paris, working for her, longing and thirsting for her letters, got only very brief scraps.

There was always a pretty excuse, always a pleading for pardon—always a generous answer—"Be happy while you can; I won't be exacting!"—never a word of truth from her—"I can't write my heart to you while I am betraying you. I can't treat you as my betrothed husband while I am letting another man make love to me!"

Somebody says that absence strengthens a strong love, and weakens a weak one. It was not exactly the last with Dolores. She loved Ernest Darrell as she had always done, but he was not there to give overt worship, and a hundred tender attentions; and her love for place and fortune was stronger at eighteen than her love for him.

She knew she had no warmer feeling for Sir Algernon than a friendly one; but he was always at her side, always paying tribute in some shape to her beauty and power, and he could give her all that her soul, a small one at present, delighted in.

She did not play this false game—to her lover, to Sir Algernon, to herself—with a light heart. She had her transports when the passion, lying so curiously dormant in her nature, forced itself to the front,—when she thought of her lover's unquestioning faith, and the wreck she was making of his life; of her deception of the man who, knowing of no tie that should bind her, loved her earnestly, and believed in her truth—and her own heart that must give up love seemed breaking. But she persuaded herself that she had made a mistake—that a home like this of Bertha's was her sphere—that she could never make Ernest happy. She would be too miserable and out of place.

Having no possible excuse to offer about deceiving Sir Algernon—save that he would give her up if she told him the truth—she crushed her conscience ruthlessly.

She had come to the pitiable condition of holding love cheap. Everyone liked her; a look from her dark eyes softened the hardest. How should she hold that dear, nay, priceless, which cost her nothing?

She went home when her visit to Bertha was over, and all at once that home seemed shrunk to miserable proportions—mean, shabby, unbearable. There were the old

discussions about money; she had never heard the word at her cousin's—the money was there; the old do-nothing life, with neither work nor pleasure to fill up the hours. Dolores was irritable, found fault with everything, nothing was good enough.

Sir Algernon had said to her the day she left her cousin's house, "You will let me come and see you at home?" and Dolores had hesitated.

This seemed the opportunity to break off, to return to her allegiance—she did not say to her lapse of faith; but Sir Algernon said, with the first touch of pride she had seen in him,—

"You are not thinking of refusing to let me see you, Miss Magniac, after our friendliness?" which last words had been uttered in a gentler tone. And then Dolores saw, what she had not known before, that she could not altogether do what she liked with this man; that she had allowed too much to be able to refuse this everyday request. So she gave permission graciously; but she had a fit of rebellion, and went out the first day he might be expected, though it was a wet afternoon.

"One of your fine friends has been here!" said Rose, when Dolores and Juliet, who had gone with her, returned. "He didn't stop long. He's rather nice."

The men callers in Bellamy-street were always hauled into the fires of criticism by the three young ladies.

Dolores said carelessly,—

"Has he?" and went upstairs to take off her hat, tossing it off, and sitting down to think. In ten minutes Amy came running upstairs, knocked, and came in with a letter.

"Mother sent me up with this," she said, "It's from Ernest. And tea is up!"

"Anyone in the drawing-room, Amy?" asked Dolores. She was pale, and her fingers closed tremblingly over the letter.

"No,—no one."

Dolores was alone. She opened her letter. There were no kisses on it, as at first, Darrell wrote that the man for whom he was acting as substitute had had a relapse. He himself would be kept in Paris longer than he had thought. Would Dolores write or call and tell his sister? He was up to the eyes in work.

"If you are at home again," he went on, "and have more leisure, write to me a little oftener. It is harder to be away from you than I thought. Sometimes I fear you are ill, and don't tell me. Don't have any constraints between us, dearest, from a mistaken fear of paining. You belong to me, and I to you. I will write again soon. Forgive this short note."

A reprieve or a sentence—which? Dolores put the letter away, and went slowly downstairs. She put aside thinking.

The very next day Sir Algernon called again. This was going to work in earnest.

"I missed you last time," he said, standing before Dolores' chair, and holding the hand she gave him. "I was so sorry," and his eyes said, "I am happy now!"

Dolores smiled, pleased and proud. Everything seemed bright to-day; and when Sir Algernon had gone she went up to dress for dinner with a most satisfied feeling.

"It is much best," she said. "Ernest will see it, too, if he knows I never should be happy. It is fair to him to have done with it. He would be miserable if I were not contented. Then we should quarrel or disagree, or keep the peace by silence, and I should have spoiled his life. Now he will see it was a mistake. I told him I didn't care for him as he did for me. And I—I shall forget it all, and be quite happy. So will he. Men do forget very soon," which was a cheap aphorism she had caught from Bertha. "We shall laugh over our love affair one day." Then she looked at herself in the glass. "Diamonds would just suit me," she said. "Fancy never to wear diamonds till you were a middle-aged matron, and ought to be giving them up almost!" Then a sudden memory struck her, and she sat down, trembling. "I wish," she said, looking her



hands together, "Ernest hadn't asked for that kiss just before he went. Sometimes it seems as if I were giving it again. Oh!" covering her face, "what will he say to me?"

Easter was close at hand, when society would be fitting. And it happened one day that Dolores called at her cousin Bertha's and found her out, but she would be back in time for tea. So Dolores went to the drawing-room to wait, and found the field in possession of Sir Algernon Lookwood.

He sprang up as she came in, and exclaimed, "Dolores!" then caught himself up, dropping the hands he had taken. "Ah, forgive me! You know I am always thinking of that name."

"Are you, indeed!" said Dolores, kneeling down to warm her hands, and smiling a trifle coquettishly under her wide-plumed hat.

"But you don't chide me!" he said, quickly.

"Oh, no! A mere slip of the tongue—"

"A slip of the tongue is another word for saying we speak our heart, isn't it?"

"I really don't know. You are a little too deep for me," said the girl, laughing, shrinking when triumph was so close.

She was much more nervous than he was. He was very earnest but cool, when he bent down to her and said,—

"Give me your hands, Dolores, they'll be warmer in mine than at that fire, and don't try and put me off. You've done that once or twice lately at your own place. I've a right to be heard."

For one wild second Dolores held her breath with a frantic feeling that made her faint, the next she had let him take her hands and lift her. The thought of the man betrayed had gone. She was as collected as if she received an offer every day of her life.

"Dolores, you know I love you!"

"I know!" she said, drooping her head a little.

"Well, when I said 'give me your hands,' I didn't mean just for a minute, but for always. Will you?"

She looked up into the man's loyal face, who was giving her honestly all he could give—his heart, his honour unstained, his possessions, who said that, "Will you?" with the slightest falter—and drew in her breath a little.

He wasn't so bold a lover as Darrell had been, who, at the first upward glance of the girl's eyes, had taken his lover's rights; but when her eyes had said more to him than this other one.

"Yes!" she said.

Was she not selling her soul and herself as truly as truly as the wretched woman whom she would not have called her sister? But two months ago the same lips that uttered that "yes" had yielded to Ernest Darrell the kiss that was the pledge of her love and his claim to it; and now beyond that yes they were silent. Not a word passed them of all this new lover had a right to know; she only shrank from letting him kiss them.

But that did not suit him. He said, half-laughing, but with something in the tone that made her feel cold all over,—

"Your lips are for me, dearest! You have given me the right yourself!"

And she submitted, because she must. Was he one of the men who are one thing as lovers, and another as husbands?

Then she steeled herself. She would forget in time—now it was too soon. Her spirits rose when he began talking brightly about what they had to do, happier than any king that ever wore crown.

The life he pictured looked very different from what she had been looking to. This was very dazzling, alluring. Yes, it was much best—it was what she was fitted for. The only thing was she wished she hadn't been obliged to break off with Ernest while he was away, forgetting or ignoring that it was possible to be frank and truthful by letter.

Her satisfaction increased when everybody

was so delighted; and only Rose said, "But poor Ernest!" when Sir Algernon brought her a lovely diamond betrothal ring in place of that gold one with the tiny pearls she had slipped off weeks ago and looked away; and each day he came brought her some gift such as she had wanted all her life; when he asked her not to keep him waiting long, and she asked with charming demureness, but with her heart beating in a sort of fear,—

"What do you call long?"

"Oh, six weeks! I'm afraid I'm never very patient. Say a month or three weeks, if I am not too bold!"

Dolores said, "No!" feeling as if she were stifled.

And she had found out already that he was imperious—that he spoke softly, but he had to be given way to. And Ernest—ah! but she mustn't think of him now—she must begin to forget.

The shorter the time the less likely he would be back. She dared not write to him till the eve of her marriage. Gentle as he had been there was in her an instinctive knowledge that he would come back if worlds were crashing round him; and she could not face him—could not face the terrible scene there would be. She must be cruel—she could not help it. And so, when Lookwood said, "Three weeks then, Dolores?" she consented.

But, after all, it was not Dolores who wrote that letter to Ernest Darrell. It was Rose, who wrote it in her sister's bedroom, whither Dolores had called her.

She was nervous, she said—she couldn't hold the pen; and she lay on the sofa, shivering convulsively, and white and cold, while Rose managed, out of sheer kindness, to compose something that was perhaps a little more sympathetic than anyone else would have written.

And the next morning saw beautiful Dolores Magniac converted into Lady Lookwood, with jewels and carriages, and two or three houses; and she wore family diamonds and old lace, and looked like the Spanish princess who was, after all, to have a real palace, while she made the vows that seemed turned into curses on lips so false as this.

Perhaps the diamonds and the white satin and lace were compensation for the shattered faith and the sordid desires!

#### CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Ernest Darrell got that kindly but ill-put together letter of Rose's, who was the only one in the house who had had a thought for him, he would not believe it—simply stared at it till the letters ran into each other, and thought he must have gone mad.

It was impossible, absurd, some trick of the Magniacs, who had never liked the engagement, and they had made Rose their tool. It was a base lie—he would go home and find out.

Dolores had not written lately, but she might have been busy, or there was nothing to say, and she never was fond of letter-writing. Supposing she would do such a thing—solely for the sake of argument—Dolores would have written before letting it come to such a crashing statement as that.

"It's preposterous, but still it's hateful to get a letter like that!" he said, looking in ten minutes as if he had passed a vigil of as many nights.

He had a heap of his usual work waiting to be done, for of course the special work that kept him in Paris did not fill up anything like his time; but he swept it on one side, and drove to the station en route for Calais.

Tina would know. Although she had been out of town the last few weeks she was probably back by now. An instinctive wish to save himself from humiliation that he would not own to checked his going to the Magniacs.

Then, again, it couldn't be true, because the society papers would have mentioned the approaching marriage of a man like Sir Algor-

non Lookwood, and he always saw the English papers.

Still, he might have missed it, or if they didn't mention the other name he would not have noticed it. Besides, one week he thought he recollected being too busy to look at all that senseless gossip.

He startled Tina, only that morning returned from a country visit, by suddenly presenting himself in her sitting-room, though she had half expected him, since she had herself reached home from a call in Bellamy-street.

She sprang up, turning pale as she looked at him. He had been coming to greet her as usual, the story they had told him seeming more and more impossible now he was at home; but he stopped short when he saw her look and dilated eyes.

His lips moved, but there was no sound came from them. Tina went to him and took his hand.

"Ernest!" she said, with all that woman tenderness that can soothe so many griefs. But it could not soothe this.

He let her keep his hand, as if he scarcely knew she had it.

"It isn't—true!" he said, not able to get his voice above a whisper.

Something seemed choking his throat and blinding his eyes; the very room looked different—Tina herself, whose hand seemed to tighten on his, or was his clinging to hers?

"It is true!" she said, firmly, but with the same soft tenderness. "I saw something about it in the paper I got in the country, and I drove straight to the Magniacs when I reached town, and they told me."

"But, Dolores. I don't think I understand," Ernest said, slowly. "It's too absurd; besides, she would have written herself!"

He drew his hand from hers and dropped into the nearest chair.

Tina, all gentleness, though her heart was burning with indignation against Dolores, put her arm about him, and drew his head against her.

You can't drive a thing like this into a man. He must get hold of it as best he can. The blow had been so sudden as to stupefy him, and he had been on the rack all the way home.

So, unresisting, he rested his head against Tina, drawing long, shuddering breaths that seemed to take all his strength.

"What did they tell you?" he whispered at last.

"Not much more, dear, than that Dolores met this Sir Algernon at her cousin Bertha's. They all seemed to tacitly encourage her in listening to him. He knew nothing about you, you know. Mrs. Magniac said Dolores was a free agent. They did not press it, but she acknowledged she thought it the best thing. Rose got hold of me afterwards, and seemed very troubled about it. She said Dolores asked her to write, and read what she had written; she lay on the sofa all the time. Rose said her sister frightened her when she called her."

"Why?"

"She was so white and trembling. Begged Rose to write, she couldn't. She told Rose the substance of what to say."

"Is this it?" as he put a letter into her hand. She read it.

It said that Dolores wished to say she thought she had made a mistake in engaging herself to Ernest. She was not fitted for his wife. She could not have made him happy. She should not be happy herself. She had been a free agent in parting. If she had done wrong there was no one to blame but herself. She prayed him to forgive her. To-morrow she was to be married to Sir Algernon Lookwood—all put very baldly, with the awkward attempts of seventeen to spare a shock.

Tina gave the letter back silently. In her own mind she thought her brother was well rid of so heartless a girl. Ernest, lifting himself, said,—

"Are those my letters over there—and the things I gave her?"

"Yes, dear! Rose gave them to me, but don't touch them now. I didn't know you would be here so soon."

"I may as well burn them now," said Darrell, getting up, steadying himself, and then crossing to where those love-tokens lay, he gathered them up, and without looking at them, and with set teeth, threw them under the hearth, put a light to them, and watched them burn.

"That wipes it out," he said, but he shuddered and turned aside.

"Ernest!" Tina said, heart sick, "you know I am always here to love you—you are so quiet."

"But why should I be anything else? I've been a fool, and my pride is hurt. Dolores cares for this—this man she has married more than she did for me. Then she will be happier, or else it's for his wealth I am flung aside. And what else can I do but despise her? When I see her I shall know which is the truth."

"Ernest, you won't see her!"

"Yes, I shall. You're afraid of temptation to me?" His lips curled. "If I could make her come to me by lifting my hand I shouldn't lift it. But there's enough of this. We'll let it alone for the future. And I must go back to Paris to-morrow. Tina, I'll go upstairs now, and make myself fit for your drawing-room."

It was all so unnatural that Tina cried bitterly when she was alone. Ernest never let himself go all that evening; he made no movement to part for the night. It was Tina who, in mercy to that terrible self-restraint, said he would have to travel to-morrow, and they had better go to bed. He said good-night to her without any special tenderness, because he was afraid of himself, poor Tina thought, shutting herself in her room, and listening to hear a sound from his, which was next. She heard none, but then he habitually moved quietly. Still she was uneasy, though she dared not go to him.

She tried to hope it was all right, feeling her heart wrung by this ungettable trouble of his. But nature had been kinder to him than Tina thought. He had kept up his proud self-control too long, and gave way when he was alone, throwing himself on the bed, and lying there all night in a sort of stupor that dulled his senses, and left him only the uncomprehended feeling of oppression that belongs to nightmare. Probably that stupor saved the overwrought brain.

He went the next day. He told Tina that he had written to Rose to thank her; and Tina's reward, if she wanted one, was his gentle "You have been very good to me, Tina."

He came back a fortnight after—for good, he said, and took up again all his old habits and ways, as bright as usual, apparently; but Tina detected a flavour of bitterness where it had not been—a certain hardening which distressed her.

He did not, as she had half feared, rush into dissipation; but there are other ways of moral wreck, and he seemed drifting into one of them, and losing the charm and sweetness of youth.

Tina knew very well what an ordeal it is to any man to have all his faith torn up by the roots, and she took him in hand bravely.

"You're too self-repressed," she said. "You're getting to be sufficient for yourself!" all very gently, making him sit by her, and adding, "I can't see you getting ruined before my eyes. You've taken to writing bitterly, Ernest, which is quite different from being sarcastic. You'll have to pull yourself up, my darling—you'll have to make more use of me. I have had a lot of trouble, and I'm older than you."

And he, listening rather bewildered, and conscience-stricken that all the while he had been trying to keep his heart-break to himself he had been only proud, and wounding the one being who loved him, did what was the best thing for him—broke down!

He softened after that, giving no confidences,

but glad to receive her mute sympathy, and dropping with her the pretence of indifference. He gave in to the fact that he was not happy. Indeed, at this time he lived his life in a blind sort of way, only saved from he knew not what of sinking and wreck by that love of Tina's that, somehow, he trusted in, though his power to trust seemed broken in pieces.

The woman who had betrayed and humiliated him did not at present bear out the idea that the sinner always feels the weight of his sin. She did not.

She was travelling all the autumn, and she came to town in November, to a house in Dover-street, luxurious from top to bottom.

She was now in her sphere, the centre of a very good circle, one of the most beautiful women in London, and raised to a height from whence she could look down on the poor little scheme of life she had had when she knew no better.

There were no drawbacks. Her husband adored her, and had not yet found out that adoration was all on his side; and she had accustomed herself to his occasional imperiousness.

If, in her own soul, there were sickenings, she had a thousand expedients for flying from herself. Yes, she enjoyed life—as she understood enjoyment!

## CHAPTER V.

It was a brilliant winter season—a great deal going on—and towards the end of it much interest was excited by the talk about a new play, to be produced in the spring, by a man not new to authorship. Indeed, he was getting more known every day, but new to this special form of authorship—Ernest Darrell.

Nobody was more full of it than Sir Algernon Lockwood, who was a strong upholder of the drama, and was on friendly terms with the manager of the Maercredy, who was also a leading actor, the house where the piece would be presented.

"We ought to go on the first night, Dolores!" Lockwood said to his wife. He made a point of being a first-nighter whenever anything good was to appear.

Dolores had heard so much at home and abroad about this play that she showed no emotion now when it was spoken of. What she did show was a lack of interest about it.

"Will it be very good?" she asked. "Why do people make so sure it will be out of the common?"

"Because everybody says Darrell is such a clever fellow. This is a new experiment, and, of course, he may fail; but it's a most interesting event."

"Oh, yes; but a man may write very well in other lines, and write a play that is execrable!" said Dolores.

"Certainly. I've known heaps like that; still I wouldn't miss it for anything. Keep your Saturdays free. It's sure to be on a Saturday, though the date is not fixed."

"Very well," said Dolores; this being just one of those requests which she knew she must obey. And he expected her to go with him. He liked her to be with him whenever possible.

She very soon found he had no idea of husband and wife going different ways. She didn't want to go this first night. It would only open up things she had rather not recall.

Ernest had taken his dismissal without a word of remonstrance. He had even said in his note to Rose—which Dolores had seen—that no doubt Dolores would be happier than with him; and it never entered the girl's head that the phrase could be sarcastic, or that the writer of it could despise her too thoroughly to reproach her. That was out of the question. And, things being so, she did not want to have them disturbed—to be brought into contact with Ernest's doings, or remember him acutely. She had to go, however.

"You don't seem to care much about it,

dear?" her husband said, before he went to the theatre to take a box.

He said it kindly, and Dolores answered, with a faint hope that he would let her do as she liked,—

"I don't care very much."

"But you'll go to please me?" said Lockwood. "I never enjoy anything without you, you know!"

"That's very foolish!" she said, smiling, not insensible, though she did not love him, to his dependence on her for even a pleasure.

"Suppose I can't be always with you—in the season, for instance?"

"One can generally arrange one's engagements so as not to clash," said Sir Algernon. "So you will come?" Then he bent and kissed her. "It's very good of you, darling! and I'm awfully selfish, but I really can't get on without you!"

Then he went away in the highest spirits, and the smile faded from Dolores' face. She began to find that love may be oppressive, and destroy freedom.

That was the last idea in her husband's mind. He was not really selfish; but was he to blame if he thought he held her heart?

Dolores dressed that Saturday night of the new play with a strange tremulousness about her.

She felt as if, somehow, things might slip out of her hands, as if she must move and speak and breathe not at her own will.

This play, too. Would Ernest have put his own story, his own heart, into it? Would he have a success? If he did she would see him, and a quiver went through her.

Then she called herself an idiot, laughed, and ran down to the drawing-room, where her husband was waiting with her flowers.

No sooner was Dolores in her box than she glanced rapidly over the house. They were in time—they always were—but not early, so that the house was full, and full of a most brilliant audience.

Nowhere did the girl see the face she sought, and did not want to find. Sir Algernon asked one of the men with them what Dolores dared not ask.

"Darrell?" said Lord Walsham. "He's with some friends in a box on this side."

Then the curtain went up, and the story unfolded itself. No, nothing of the author's own story, Dolores acknowledged, with something between relief and disappointment. The man here was the wrong doer, and on different lines from lapse of faith.

Sir Algernon, a keen critic, exclaimed, when the first act was over,—

"By Jove! if it doesn't fall off it'll be a fine piece!" And when the curtain went up again, he became as absorbed as the rest of the crowded house.

There were faults in the play—slight ones—but it did not fall off. It grew in intense interest, the characters developing in masterly style; the dialogue, always fine, deepening in force as the strong situations called for it.

Very early in the evening there seemed to have run through the audience that wave of sympathy which held every soul as of one mind, intent to breathlessness.

Dolores, growing paler and paler, sat with a changeless smile through the excitement that followed the close of the last act.

The wild cries for the author filled her ears, and then she leant forward, looking to the stage.

Would he come? He must! He was there. Oh, that heart of hers! if it would beat less madly! If she could tear and rend these chains on her limbs! on her soul! Herself had slipped them on her hands!

Surely the man was avenged!

Acknowledging with a quiet grace the plaudits of the house, did his eyes, lifting themselves to the sea of faces before him, go as by magnetic attraction to one face there, pale, with great black eyes wide and strained?

"Darrell," said the manager, catching hold of the young man when at last he was permitted to leave the stage, "I want you. A



perfect triumph, isn't it? Why, my dear fellow, you're quite white!"

"Oh, I dare say," said Darrell, smiling. "It's a little trying, you know!"

"So it is. It's a trial a good many men would like to have! Here's a fellow wants to know you whom you ought to know."

And then there were more congratulations; and a man came through the throng—an aristocratic-looking fellow with a bright face.

"Here you are, Lookwood!" said the actor. "I couldn't find you. This is our prince of authors. Darrell—Sir Algernon Lookwood."

Sir Algernon, delightfully excited, poured out his congratulations so rapidly that it gave Darrell time to steady himself from the shock of the sudden meeting, to stand and talk and smile, and be collected enough to take the measure of Dolores' husband, and find no surface faults with him, Frank, warm-hearted, openly envying the man who had begun to win fame, Sir Algernon was what people call "a nice fellow."

"Do you envy me?" Darrell said, laughing. "But, you know, some people would say it is the other way."

"You envy me? In Heaven's name, why? I've often wished I could get more brains by giving up half my fortune. But I must be off. Hope to have the pleasure of seeing you again." Then he shook hands, and went away to meet Dolores in the lobby.

Dolores, who sat silent in the carriage—who had stood outside that hard-earned triumph—who had seen it with yearning, passionate eyes, whose soul had cried out impotently to the man whom she had deserted for this silk-lined carriage that was to save her dainty feet from touching the pavement; for this velvet gown that cost so many golden guineas; for these soundless carpets, and the glass and china on the dining-room table, and the flashing mirrors, and the sound of "my lady" from so many servants!

And withal she was not free, even to be alone. This man who owned her, body and soul, who had a right to her every thought, wanted her beside him—wanted her to talk to him, to be pleased when he was!

He could not know her whole being recoiled from him. He could not dream that if Ernest Darrell had stood in that open doorway and called to her she would have walked straight across to him, and followed where he led.

This was her forgetting—that the love she had thrust out should have lain in her heart all these months, and grown and expanded silently, and lifted itself at last, and then held her in its thrall—conquered her—made of her its plaything—as she had done with the man who had sown the seeds of that love.

## CHAPTER VI.

"Dolores, I've been asking Ernest Darrell to come to dinner on Monday," said Sir Algernon Lookwood, coming in to luncheon a week or two afterwards, after having been all the morning out.

Dolores stooped as if to release her dress from something it had caught in, for the footman stood waiting, and she must not let her face be seen.

"Is he coming?" she said. Then lifting herself. "You've asked him before?"

"Yes; and he always said he was too busy—or something of the sort. Literary men in anything like work do leave so."

"You haven't answered my question now, Algernon?" said Dolores, smiling.

"Didn't I? I beg your pardon. Yes, he said he would come, so get a few people to meet him. He's the nicest fellow! I should like to know him very well. Dolores, you're eating nothing—are you well?"

"Quite, thanks, only not hungry. If you'd give me an idea the sort of people who would suit Mr. Darrell."

She had learned to be so false, even in the details of life. No one of her family had ever mentioned Darrell's name to her husband.

Now she trembled lest Darrell should decline to keep up the deception, but she dared not warn him even when he came.

Why, in Heaven's name, was he coming? He had refused before, made excuses, she felt sure, because he could not trust himself to see her or wished to spare her. Why did he change his line? Had he forgotten? Was it nothing to him to meet her as another man's wife? Did it cost him nothing to be under that man's roof?

This was how she questioned herself while her husband mentioned some people she might ask. This was Friday—nearly three days to live through in torture till he came—till she knew how much or how little mercy she might expect from him.

Her security, such as it was, seemed all at once threatened, and that being all she had she clung to it as a drowning man clings to the rope flung him from shore. She counted the minutes to that Monday night—counted them in a fear that made her feel ill—in a trembling gladness that made her cold and sick. Her punishment had begun in earnest.

Tina made no remonstrance when her brother told her of his engagement. She did not like it—she was afraid for him; but she knew he would go—and must if he had promised. Perhaps, too, after excusing himself more than once he could not easily get out of it, and why should he except for his own sake? Tina had not forgiven Dolores, for she alone knew that Ernest would never be quite the same again.

The four or five other guests were already assembled in the Dover-street drawing-room on the Monday evening. Dolores, looking exquisite in pale pink, sat talking to an elderly colonel with a very divided attention, but keeping up her share in the conversation with ready smile and word, though her heart grew sick with dread, and her eyes went continually to the clock on the mantel-piece. A quarter to eight—would he come?

Ten minutes! She drew a long breath, half-relieved, and yet, how flat it all was! He would not come—he had been detained! Then a sudden rush of emotion almost choked her. The door opened, and her husband went towards it.

"Who is it?" she said, putting up her fan to hide her face, and the fan she could not hold steadily. Her heart swooned within her. She felt as if she must cry out to loose that tightness round her throat.

Her husband was bringing Ernest up to her—of course the strange guest whom she did not know! And, then, was his new play a success? She must say something pretty about that presently. She must be cordial when he was presented. Oh, the bitter mockery of it—this man, who had been her lover! What was she to say or do when he came to her? She could not think. She wanted to go to him; but she must not—she must stay where she was and wait. Would he know her agony? He always had known how she felt!

"Dolores," said Sir Algernon, in his bright, pleasant way. "I suppose I needn't present Mr. Darrell formally?"

The words went like a blow to the woman's conscience. What did he mean—did he know? Her whole being seemed to away and sink; her eyes almost turned to her husband the wild startled glance the long lashes hid; but the supreme need saved her. Scarcely had the last word left his lips than she took it up; forcing a smile to her eyes, and her lips to speak distinctly.

"My husband implies, Mr. Darrell, that authors are public property! I suppose he really means—"

"Why, that you saw him the other night," said Sir Algernon, smiling.

Darrell held for just the regulation time, if there is such, the hand Dolores gave him—the hand he had once taken and held at his will. Did he know what his touching it cost her? The dread in her heart, the sudden fear at her husband's words, the silent appeal

in the eyes she raised and dropped directly? Of course he did—knew by a thousand indications no one else in the room would have dreamed of—knew it by instinct, when to all else she seemed only the self-possessed hostess. Yes, and pitied her, despised her, and yet felt as if he could have dared the man beside him to touch her—as if she were his to lead with reproaches, and then gather to his heart and forgive, and kiss away the tears he had forced her to shed. What he did was to drop the hand that he held as a stranger, and make a conventional apology for being so late.

"We literary folk," he said, smiling, "can so seldom depend on our time."

"I dare say," said Dolores, carefully guarding each word that she might not show too intimate a knowledge of literary men. "But we are very glad to have you, however late. Oh, there's the butler. Mr. Darrell, may I ask you to take down Miss Millwood?"

She herself fell to the share of the elderly colonel. Darrell was not near her at dinner, but between pretty Miss Millwood and another lady.

A silent rage gathered slowly in Dolores' heart. He was unchanged; he didn't care, he had been unmoved when he met her. Ah! she knew what it was. He didn't hate her, he despised her; she had made him despise her. Just that soft laugh, just the vividly bright smile, the clear, unshadowed eyes—not a line altered! She hadn't made him suffer because he thought she wasn't worth it.

In the drawing-room he neither avoided nor sought her—treated her precisely like any other lady who was his hostess. If he had only avoided her—that would have been better than this absolute indifference that wrung her very soul.

When she asked him did he sing he did not even look a reproach at the tacit falsehood; only said, as she had heard him say a few minutes before to Miss Millwood, "Yes, I sing!"

He had not betrayed her to her husband; he had not made a single sign that he was no stranger. That was the only indication he had given of remembering anything between them. She was too conscience-stricken to be proud, not humble enough to acknowledge she deserved such treatment. She was hurt and angry, and full of a fervent desire to set herself right with him.

Sir Algernon was cordiality itself—made enough of Darrell to flatter a vain man; but Darrell was not vain. Of course he appreciated the value of friendship from a man in Lookwood's position, and Lookwood himself he could have taken to immensely if he had not been Dolores' husband; but he could not let the thing go further. It was unnatural—impossible.

And the strain was more than he could stand. A few more efforts like that of to-night, and there would not be much work left in him.

Like, when he got home, looked at him on or twice before she ventured to say,—

"Well, Ernest, you seem very tired!"

He laughed.

"And you want to say, Tina, I told you."

"No," said Tina. "I never say that."

Ernest came and sat down by her, with change in his handsome face.

"But in very truth," he said, "you are anxious about me. You think I am rushing on temptation. You are uneasy!"

"Dear Ernest," Tina said affectionately, "you know I trust you as far as far as possible, but putting aside all danger—to you, maybe to her, why torture yourself?"

"I had to, Tina," he said, getting up. "I had to see her once, to know if after all she was happy, if she cared for her husband, then I could have been content."

"And now, Ernest?" Tina said, watching him, as he walked backwards and forwards.

"It's been all of no use!" Darrell said,

passionately. "She has bartered her soul for gold, and she is wretched!"

Then he flung himself down beside Tina, who took his hand and held it, feeling it tremble like a child's.

"She never loved him!" the man said, shaking from head to foot. "She has shattered her life and mine, and to-day she would fling all her wealth behind her to be happy for an hour! Tina, Tina, what shall I do? I can't bear it! I can't tear her out of my heart, for all her bitter failure, and that is the hardest of all!"

And Tina, after her fashion, said nothing at all. He had shown her his heart at last, after months of self-suppression. How the wounds still bled freely, for all that none but she knew their depth—the deepest wound of all, not Dolores' desertion, but the baseness of her soul, that he had deemed near Heaven. He rallied after a minute, and spoke more quietly, but with a voice not always under control.

"I wouldn't call her back to me if I could," he said. "There isn't that danger to me as you fear. I love her—yes, and shall as long as I breathe; but I don't honour her. Heaven help me! I don't—I never could trust her! She is something different from what I thought her, or else I was a blind fool who might have seen and did not. Yet I don't know. What man who loved her could place her lower than the highest? She used to say sometimes, half frightened of herself, that she didn't love me as well as I loved her, and I knew it too; but then, one doesn't expect a girl of eighteen to love as a man does. I've tried to forget it all, Tina—I can't."

"The life of one's life," Tina said, softly, thinking of the dead husband she had loved. "One can't forget that, my darling!"

"You always understand, Tina," he said, gratefully. "You never tell me I am wrong or foolish. What should I have been but for you? At first," speaking slowly and gently, "I never could look forward at all. If I tried I saw a great blackness stretched right across. I was all chaos, as if the whole universe had crashed into pieces and left me standing alone, with neither future on earth nor Heaven beyond. I don't think I could go through that again. I couldn't have got through it then but for you."

"But for me! But I could do so little for you, my own Ernest!"

"You let me alone, Tina, which was just what I wanted; but you did for me everything, because you were true!"

"Ah!" said Tina, "I see!"

Ernest said, after a long while of silence,—"I shall never go there again if I can help it. It seems to me like treason, when her husband knows nothing. I can't stand the tacit deception. But if it comes to her thinking I am afraid to meet her, I shall go. I am not afraid; and were I a thousand times afraid she should not know it. In other places I must meet her; the very society Sir Algernon cultivates I mix with."

"She has told her husband nothing, then?"

"Oh, no! He would not try to be friends with me if she had. He would not have married her at all, he is much too fine a fellow for such dishonour. When he does know, as he must one day—"

"What then, Ernest? What will he do?"

"He is a little less of a fool than I. He will shut her out of his heart better than I have done. She holds it now—by a lie. And when he does know—how lonely she will be!"

He bent his face down on his hand, and Tina did not break in on his bitter thought by word or look. Such moods of self-revelment must be left to themselves—not to be even soothed too much.

Darrell lifted his head presently, very much himself again, but paler than usual. He put his arm round his sister, kissing her tenderly.

"I don't often trouble you as I have to-night," he said. "I was unstrung—that is all the excuse I have."

"You need none, dear Ernest. Talk to me when you like, be silent when you like. I

know that even with the most self-contained people the throwing aside of reserve is sometimes a relief."

"To me," Darrell said, smiling; "but to you, you unselfish little soul?"

"Why, Ernest, who else have I but you to be unselfish for?" said Tina, laying her head against his shoulder.

And the bitter sense of contrast that forced itself into his mind made his answer only a silent caress.

(To be continued.)

## NELL'S CAKES.

—o—

"You don't really mean it, Nell, do you?" Bessie asked, rather dubiously.

"Why not?" was the stout reply, and Nell's blue eyes had a look in them which, as Bessie knew, meant business. "Am I to let Hal give up his medical studies when we all know he is bound to make a great doctor some day, and be an ornament to the family—am I to let him give it all up, I say, just because I am too proud to let anyone see me making cakes?"

"Yes; but it isn't just what a lady usually does, my dear!" said her friend, still doubtfully. "What would your cousins—those Lionels—say, if they saw you baking cakes publicly at the Food Exhibition?"

Nell laughed in her merry way till her white teeth showed and the most entrancing dimples played about her sweet mouth.

"I have no doubt the Lionels would commit me to Bedlam, if they could," she said, laughingly. "But I am going to do it, Bessie! The baking powder people have offered me a handsome sum, and I can't afford to refuse it!"

"Well," said Bessie, accepting the inevitable, "When a woman will, she will, you may depend on it! I wouldn't mind, Nell, but I know just how the men will stand and stare at you" (Nell tossed her pretty head), "and they will say familiar things to you!"

"No, they won't!" said Nell, with a flash in her eyes. "I'd like to see any man speak to me, if I didn't want him to!"

Bessie looked at her haughty pose and smiled.

"I guess you can take care of yourself," she said, admiringly. "Well, my dear, I wish you good luck with your cakes!"

When the Food Exhibition opened Nell was there, and Bessie, who went to see her, thought the baking powder people had been very wise.

Nell wore a plain print dress. Her sleeves came just to the elbow, and her round white arms, which were thrust in a big bowl of flour, were set off by little white embroidered ruffles.

A pretty white cap half hid her fair hair, and a snowy-white apron completed a costume that in a certain way was much more attractive than a ball dress.

"Nell," said Bessie, enthusiastically, "you look good enough to eat yourself!"

"Thank you!" said the pretty cook, as she handed a fresh tray of cakes to a boy in a white linen suit, who was carrying relays to and from the oven.

"There, Johnny—that's the fifteenth! Tell Maria not to glaze these. Don't they look nice?" she continued, waving her hand towards a pile of golden-brown, smoking cakes which were lying on a dish, surrounded by little figured pats of butter. "I have sold a hundred tins of baking powder already."

"Nell," said Bessie, admiringly, "you will make your fortune yet!"

The Food Exhibition was crowded that evening, and never for a minute was there a lack of spectators about the baking powder exhibit, where Nell was making her cakes and passing them out among the crowd.

The work and the heat had flushed her face a lovely red, and it must be admitted that

people paid more attention to her than they did to the cakes.

"By Jove, Beverley!" said one of the men who sauntered that way, "There's a wonderfully pretty girl baking cakes over there! See her?"

Beverley kissed the tips of his kid gloves airily and moved towards the stand where Nell was.

"A deuced pretty girl!" he drawled, quite audibly, as he leaned over the rail and watched the deft white fingers sifting flour. "What the dickens is she doing here?"

"Sh!" said his companion; "she'll hear you."

"Well, there is no offence, old man," said Beverley, still in the same audible tone. "No woman ever resents any praise of her beauty."

He turned as he spoke, and, leaning over the rail, he looked boldly up into Nell's eyes.

"Don't you get awfully hot and tired here?" he said, pulling his attenuated moustache in a judicious way.

Nell bit her lip.

"There, Johnny!" she said, turning her back quickly. "You must get these a little browner than the last ones."

Beverley waited a moment.

"Won't you give me a cake?" he said, with the air of one who was asking for a kiss.

"The cakes are distributed on the other side of the stand, sir," said Nell, without lifting her eyes from her work.

"You'd better shut up," said the other gentleman, in a low tone. "You are evidently on the wrong tack."

Beverley paid no attention to his friend. He simply pulled his moustache more persistently, and said,—

"But a cake from your hands would gain additional acceptance. Will you not honour me with the favour?"

Nell was still silent and implacable, and he added,—

"Why are you so unfriendly? You look very hot and tired; won't you let me bring you some ice cream?"

"No!" said Nell, turning upon him with quick anger. "I will thank you to let me alone. I am attending to my business, and I wish you would attend to yours."

"Oh, come now!" Beverley went on, insolently.

But his friend seized him by the arm, and dragged him aside.

"See here," he cried. "You've got to come away from here! Don't you see you are annoying the lady?"

"Annoying her!" Beverley retorted, with a laugh, as he shook himself free. "What a milkop you are, Jackson! You let me alone, will you?"

"No, I won't!—not if you are going to annoy that lady with your unwelcome attentions!"

"The deuce you won't!" said Beverley, his voice growing higher and more angry, till people began to look around, and query what the matter was.

"Gentlemen, if you please!" said Nell, in a dignified voice. "Move on!"

"I'll be hanged if I'll let any man dictate to me what I shall do!" cried Beverley, angrily.

"See here, old man," said Jackson, persuasively, "that last champagne has gone to your head. Come! don't make a scene here!"

"I want one of those cakes," the other persisted, "and I'm going to have it!"

Jackson caught him by the shoulder, and pushed him through the crowd; but Beverley was furious.

Certainly he was somewhat the worse for his wine, for he whirled round, and struck his friend across the cheek.

There was a crowd in a minute; but Nell, who was in an agony of shame, had the satisfaction of seeing both men marched off very promptly by the police.

Tears came to her eyes as she went on



mixing the cakes. Bessie had been pretty nearly right after all.

The people stared at her; one whispered to another, and pointed at her.

Her cheeks were crimson with mortification; but, fortunately, it was almost time to close, and she could go home to weep her chagrin out on her own pillow.

She told no one about it, but went back the next day doubly resolved to wear a mask of impenetrable reserve. She would not look at anybody; and when she saw coming towards her a man who had one cheek freely decorated with court-plaster, she looked stubbornly away.

"I beg your pardon," he said, lifting his hat, "but may I speak to you a moment?"

At a glance Nell recognised Jackson, and coloured.

"I—I have been very anxious to speak to you ever since last night!" he said, hurriedly. "I am very sorry for that unfortunate occurrence, and I have come to apologise!"

He drew out his card-case as he spoke, and handed her a card, on which she read, with some surprise, the name—

"LIONEL JACKSON."

"I am truly sorry for what happened!" he went on. "The fact is, my friend had had a little too much champagne last night, and he is awfully ashamed of himself! He hadn't the face to come and see you, but he wanted me to apologise for him. And," he added, with a faint smile, "I think he has been well punished. They kept him all night in the station-house."

"I think you have been punished, too!" Nell said, glancing at his plastered face.

"Oh, that isn't anything!"

"I—I think I am obliged to you in one way," Nell said, slowly. "You did try to make him behave."

"I am afraid I was more zealous than discreet. At any rate, I am very sorry for it all!"

"Well, it is all over now. And," she added, lifting her eyes, "I have had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of some one of whom I have heard very often, through my mother, Mrs. Trenton."

"What! You are not—"

"I am—your second cousin, if you don't mind the truth," said Nell, demurely.

Jackson looked at her for a moment in amazement.

"I have heard of you," he said, presently. "Your name is Nell, isn't it?"

She nodded.

"But," he continued, "what are you doing here?"

"I am earning my bread, as well as making it," she said, with a smile. "Will you have a cake?"

"Thanks! They look awfully good! But you have a brother, haven't you?"

"Hal? yes, Hal's at college, and, the family finances being at a low ebb, I am here."

"Does Hal know it?"

"No, indeed!"

"I thought not."

"You must buy a box of baking powder now," said Nell, as he finished the cake.

"Half-a-dozen!" Jackson answered. "But what will I do with it? Is it good for anything besides making cakes?"

"It will lighten all manner of sadness," said Nell, as she gave him the whole six tins. "There, please! Now you are to go away. I can't stand here talking to young men, you know."

"But you have not accepted my apology."

"Oh, yes, I have!"

"May I come and get another cake to-morrow?"

"If you buy some more baking powder?" Jackson laughed, and went away much pleased with himself.

Every day after that he attended the Food Exhibition, and bought a tin of baking powder.

When the exhibition was over, a month

later, he called on Nell by her permission, and brought a large valise full of the unopened tins.

"I want you to take these," he said; "I don't know what to do with them!"

"But what do you want me to do with them?" said Nell, laughing.

"I wish you would continue to make cakes for me all my life!" he said, looking her in the eyes with an expression that brought the colour to her cheeks. "Nell, could anything induce a good, brave girl like you to marry a worthless fellow like me?"

"Something might," she said, demurely.

"What?" was his eager reply.

"Love!—nothing else?"

"But I do love you!" he went on. "From the very first your face charmed me! Then I admired your independent spirit! and then I learned to love your sweet, womanly self! Nell, if you ever could care enough for me—"

She held out her hand.

"I do!" she said, softly; and Jackson saw the light of his own happiness in her eyes.

When Bessie heard of it she was ecstatic.

"To think you should have captured one of the rich Lions by baking cakes!" she said, with a rapturous sigh.

And now that Nell is married, and Bessie visits her, they have together what they call "cake teas," in memory of how Nell won "the best husband in the world!"

## THE FIRST CRUSADE.

—o—

ROBERT BLAINE paced up and down the small room that had been the especial sanctum of his brother-in-law, Dick Hatton, his brows knit in perplexed thought, his fingers nervously rattling his watch-chain. Mary, his only sister, Dick's widow, was sobbing on her sofa.

"Mary, dear," he said, presently, "it is cruel to make you talk, but if I could only get some really clear idea of the business, I might, perhaps, help you."

Mary sat up, and tried to still the sobs that the talk about her husband—not yet a month dead—had called forth. She was a woman with fair hair and blue eyes, and young enough still to make her deep widow's mourning doubly pathetic.

"About the house?" she said.

"Yes. You say it is almost paid for?"

"The price was £1,500 for the house and grounds. There is a very large orchard and vegetable garden, besides the garden in front. Dick was to pay for it just as he could, but not less than sixty pounds a year. We were so anxious to have a home of our own, Rob, that we worked very hard for it, and that is the reason I know all about it. I put all my writing money in, too; not much, to be sure, but it helped along."

"And you are sure there was £1,000 paid to Mr. Sharp?"

"I am positively certain of it."

"And the receipts are lost?"

"Lost! Gone entirely. Rob, I never dared say it, for I cannot prove it, but I firmly believe Mr. Sharp stole Dick's receipt-book."

"Why?"

"Well, he is a man who is not much respected, and there have been several stories told about him that throw a doubt over his honesty. Still, he keeps clear of the law. Dick took the receipts for the payments of the house in a small red account-book that had nothing else in it. That day—no, I am not going to cry again, dear—that dreadful day he sent word to Mr. Sharp that he would pay him fifty pounds. He had sold a lot of wool, and I had twenty pounds saved. I know he had it when Mr. Sharp came. Then there was that dreadful hemorrhage, and how could we think of anything but Dick for the next three days? But, Rob, Mr. Sharp was

alone with him when he was taken ill, and gave the alarm. There was nothing to prevent his slipping the receipt-book into his pocket, and I believe he did it. It cannot be found, and Mr. Sharp would not dare to assert that he has never been paid anything but rent for the house if he did not know I cannot produce the receipts."

"H'm! Yes, I see. But one cannot accuse a man of such a crime as that without some proof."

"I understand that. I think he intended, if Dick got better, to pretend it was a mistake or he might have meant to cheat him."

"Was there never any witness to the payments?"

"No. He would come over, or Dick would go to him and pay whatever we could spare. But I have seen the receipts often! And think, Rob, how that thousand pounds would help me now!"

Rob did think of it! He was a young man who had made for himself a home in a distant country, over which he had asked his widowed sister to preside. He had come to her with open hands and heart to offer a home to her and her two boys, knowing that his brother-in-law had lived upon his salary as a clerk in a wholesale house. But he had found that these two, by close economy, by Dick's careful speculation, and Mary's contributions to magazine literature, had nearly secured a home of their own, when a sudden rupture of a blood-vessel had ended life for one, and left the other desolate.

Many long talks the brother and sister had about this cruel wrong pressing upon her, but arriving always at the conclusion that only the finding of the receipt book could help her. They were still talking in the room that Dick had devoted to his wife's literary labours and his own business affairs, and dignified by the name of library, when Rob, pointing to the wall, said:

"Where on earth did you ever get that horrid daub, Mary? What is it?"

"The First Crusade," said Mary, smiling. "It is a daub, Rob, but Dick was fond of it for the sake of his only brother, who painted it. Poor boy! He imagined himself a great artist, and this picture a masterpiece. But after vainly trying to sell it he gave it to Dick. It was a dreadful job to get it up, and you see it takes all the space on that side of the room. How we are to get it down is a mystery."

"Do you value it?"

"No. I scarcely knew Jem; he died ten years ago, and the picture is frightful."

"H'm!—I think I see a light!" said Rob, musingly. "Well, dear, as there is nothing to be gained by staying here, how soon will you be ready to go to Woodside with me?"

"I will begin to pack to-day."

It proved to be a tedious job to gather all the household goods into travelling compass, to start off box after box, to take leave of neighbours, and make preparations for the long journey and new home. But Mary found comfort in constant work, and the next week most of her packing was finished.

But the day before that appointed for their start, Rob sent for Mr. Sharp, to make one more appeal to his honesty. There was a long, rather stormy interview in the dismantled library, where only the huge painting and two chairs had been left. Rob had left the room, under some pretence of questioning his sister, and Mr. Sharp was peeping about in a Paul Pry way that Mary had told her brother was habitual with him when he made a discovery. There was an ugly space in a recess, where Dick Hatton's stationary desk had stood for ten long years against the wall. Scraps of paper and string, torn envelopes, all the debris of packing, were scattered about, but wedged into the top of the map board was an envelope, almost concealed, that Mr. Sharp was sure contained an inclosure. Warily he crept up to it, seized it, and found it a sealed envelope, directed,—

"To MARY my wife. To be opened only after my death."

He crammed it hastily into his pocket, and when Rob returned took his departure. Something important must be in that paper, that had evidently slipped out of the desk when it was moved and escaped observation. But the disclosure was a startling one. Without any scruple of honour or honesty, Mr. Sharp broke the seal and read:—

"DEAR MARY,

"It has been long known to you, dear, that my life was a precarious one, and you will not be surprised that I have made a little provision for you and the children. Poor Jem left me £2,000 in United States bonds, and, unwilling to trust it to any bank, I have hidden it away in the lower right-hand corner of the picture he gave me. The interest will run on until you take the envelope from its hiding-place, as no one else will ever move the picture. Forgive me for keeping this one secret from you.

"DICK"

No one else! Why, they might tear it down at any moment. A cold sweat broke out all over the rascal's body. All this hoarded wealth, the result of scheming, cheating, saving, was as nothing compared to this newly-discovered treasure. Nobody else must find those bonds!

But when he returned to the house he found everything in hurried confusion, and Rob issuing hurried orders.

"I can't talk to you now," he said, as Mr. Sharp came up. "I am obliged to leave by the 7.30 p.m. train from B—, and it is nearly two o'clock now. There is still a van-load to go, and the children and Mary are getting dressed for the carriage at three o'clock."

"But I must speak to you."

"And that confounded picture has to be packed, too," cried Rob, bustling into the house. "Here, some of you fellows, bring a step-ladder!"

"No, no!" cried Mr. Sharp. "I—I came over to see if I couldn't buy that picture."

"Buy it!" Rob cried. "You might as well ask Mary to sell you one of her boys! Why, her dear brother-in-law painted it!"

"But it looks so well where it is and will be so awkward to move!" cried Mr. Sharp watching with horror Rob's preparations to tear the painting from the wall. "I will give you a good price."

"How much? But I am sure Mary will never part with it!"

"Fifty pounds."

"Bah!"

"One hundred pounds."

"One hundred pounds for such a work of art as that! Why, man alive, if Mary ever could part with it, it ought to bring five times that sum!"

"Five times that sum! Five hundred pounds!" cried Mr. Sharp.

"Certainly," said Rob, coolly. "But we do not wish to sell it at all. Come, hurry up! Take out the top nails very carefully there."

"I'll give you five hundred pounds for it!" cried Mr. Sharp, desperately, rapidly calculating the ten years' interest on the bonds.

"But we leave here in half-an-hour! You don't carry five hundred pounds round in your pocket, do you?"

"No, but I carry my cheque-book. I'll give you a cheque!"

"Won't do! I cannot stop to cash it."

"I'll run over to the bank with it myself."

"Well, you haven't much time. You get the money, and I'll speak to Mary while you are gone. I'm not sure she will take it!"

Off started Mr. Sharp, and Rob hurried the last boxes on the van and sent it off just as the carriage drove up. Mary and the boys were already seated when Mr. Sharp came

round the corner, actually carrying the money in his hands.

Very carefully Rob counted it, the crisp notes for each, that represented the exact sum that Dick had paid the rascally landlord for the house his widow was leaving.

"Correct!" he said, presently. "There is no need of a receipt. You can see the picture through the window. Good-bye!"

The carriage whirled off, and Mr. Sharp entered the empty house. The workmen had gone with the van, but when he pulled the corner of the canvas, he found it already loosened from the frame. A large, yellow envelope, with three immense red seals, was behind it, and with trembling fingers he tore it open. A long slip of paper was the only inclosure, and, half-fainting, the disappointed schemer read,—

"This makes our account square."

## FACETIÆ.

JACK: "The land for the people—that's my motto, Will!" Will: "Supposing we had a bit, what could we do with it?" Jack: "Sell it!"

"MARRIAGE," says a cynic, "is like putting your hand into a bag containing ninety-nine snakes and one eel. You may get the eel, but the chances are against you."

MINNIE: "Mr. Binx actually proposed to me last night. I never was so surprised in all my life." Mamie: "You needn't have been. His sole ambition is to be thought eccentric."

MRS. WINKS: "So you have taken another companion for better or worse, eh?" Mrs. Secondtrip: "Only for better, my dear. He can't possibly be worse than the other was."

D.: "What did you say?" E.: "I didn't say anything at all." D.: "You didn't, eh?" "Well, next time express yourself more plainly, if you please."

TAILOR: "The fashionable spring coat, sir, has but three buttons." Old Customer: "Put on the usual number. They will get down to three soon enough."

"JOHNNY, you have been a bad boy to-day." "Yes'm." "Are you sorry?" "Yes'm." "Why are you sorry?" "Cos I know that the chances are about seventeen to two that I'm goin' to get licked."

MRS. JAGGS (suspiciously): "Your eyes are watery and terribly inflamed." Mr. Jaggs (with an injured air): "Well, next time you give me a Bible for a birthday present, don't select one with such fine print."

"WHEN I have a subject of importance to consider," said a conceited man, "I give my whole mind to it." "You couldn't give much less," remarked the blunt man, who is always standing by on such occasions.

JUDGE (to police officers): "Are you sure, sir, that the prisoner was drunk?" Officer: "Is it drunk, your honour? Shure at he ud spoke through the telephone the brith uv'im ud av made the poles shtagger."

AN honest old farmer once, addressing a school-house audience on temperance, confessed that he had been a drinker. "But, my friends," said he, in conclusion, "I never drank to success."

PASTOR: "Thomas, don't you think your parents would feel very sore if they knew you were fishing on the Sabbath?" Thomas: "Yes, sir; but not half as sore as I'd feel if they found it out."

MAUD: "And so you are going to marry Charlie Demare. It was only a month ago that I heard you say you positively hated him." Belle: "Yes, I know, but that was when he was going with that horrid Jenkins girl."

A.: "You are so modest I don't see how you ever came to propose to your wife." B.: "That was very simple. I said nothing, and she said nothing, and so one word brought on another."

JUDGE: "Have you ever been punished before?" Prisoner: "Well, at all events, not in the last ten years." "Are you sure of that?" "Certain, sure. I've just served out a ten years' sentence."

MRS. BADMATCH: "Oh, William, you are such a brute. Why do you treat me so? Am I not a good wife, and as true as steel?" Mr. B.: "Yes, my dear, but, like some steel, you are too highly tempered."

BON BOUNDER (petulantly): "I'll never take the end seat in a theatre again! You have to jump up every time anyone passes in or out." His sister: "Ah, now you know what a nuisance you are when you have an inside seat!"

MOTHER (policeman's wife): "Willie, I've been shouting for you this half hour. How is it you are never around when you are wanted?" Son: "Well, mother, I suppose I inherit it from father."

A GENTLEMAN said to a large crowd that was pouring out of a public hall: "What's going on inside?" "A humorous lecture," was the reply. "Is it over already, it's only nine o'clock?" "No," shouted the crowd, "it's only about half over."

"BEFORE I go," he said, in broken tones, "I have one last request to make of you." "Yes, Mr. Sampson," said she. "When you return my presents, please prepay the express charges. I cannot afford to pay any more on your account."

RIGHTOUSLY INDIGNANT.—"Barber (s suggestively): "Your hair is very dry and harsh, sir." Customer (wrathfully): "And one of your ears is a good deal bigger than the other, but you don't like to have people twisting you of it, do you?"

A SICK dude called on a doctor. "What he needs," advised the physician, "is absolute seclusion and solitude, with nothing whatever to excite him." "Leave him alone with his thoughts," promptly said his friends, as they withdrew from the room."

JUDGE: "If you know of any mitigating circumstance you are at liberty to state it." Prisoner: "I don't know of any except that I took to stealing because I didn't want to loaf around the street corners and be taken for a detective."

EFFIE'S BROTHER: "Do you love my sister Effie?" Effie's Steady Company: "Why, Willie, that is a queer question. Why do you want to know?" Effie's Brother: "She said last night she would give a dollar to know; and I'd like to scoop it in."

FATHER: "Aha, so you ran away from Sunday school to go skating and broke through the ice, did you?" Son: "No, I didn't. I fell asleep in church and got locked in." Father: "But how did you get so wet?" Son: "That's from the tears I shed when waked up."

MRS. M. met frequently two charming little girls going to school, who looked each very much like the other. One morning she asked one of them, "Are you twins, my dear?" With an indignant shake of her curls, she answered: "No me! We're hofe girls."

TEACHER: "Johnny, where is the North Pole?" "Johnny: "I don't know." "Don't know where the North Pole is?" "When Doctor Kane and Franklin and Greeley hunted for it and couldn't find it, how am I to know where it is?"

ARTIST: "Excuse me, miss, but I would like much to make a study of your face." Miss Ann Teeko: "Ah! certainly, sir. How shall I pose?" Artist: "Oh, not at all. You see I'm making a study of an old woman, and someone told me your wrinkles were just immense."

THE proprietor of a shooting-box in the west of Ireland, having been driven home in a regular down-pour, and perceiving that Jehu was almost in rage, sympathetically said: "Pat, my poor fellow, you must be wet through and through!" "Faith, then, no, your honour," replied Pat: "I am wet only to the shin; but, please goodness, I'll be wet inside as soon as your honour can get out the sperrits!"



## SOCIETY.

STOCKINGS of sable hue are universal favourites, unless worn with plaid dresses, when they may be of similar tartan to that of the gown. Coloured stockings for day wear are, to use a somewhat slangy phrase, "entirely out of it."

CHRISTINE NILSSON's youngest niece, Charlotta Johansson, who is sixteen years old, is supposed to give great promise as a singer, as she has a very good voice. The young lady was to have completed her education at Christiansa, but suffered so from homesickness that she has returned to her home.

THE new colours of the season are very striking. One of them is called after the heroine of the hour in France, "Joan of Arc." It is a deep prune shade, with a sort of reflection of dark grey in it, and looks particularly well in velvet.

INSTEAD of using liquid perfumes or powders in New York, it is now considered the thing to "penoil" one's self here and there, in the hollow of the hand, on the cheek, or on the forehead with small sticks of concentrated perfumes representing one's favourite odour.

THE rheumatism from which her Majesty is suffering, which has become chronic since her fall, has caused a contraction of the muscles of the leg. It does not impair her general health, as she is and looks well; but there is no disguising the fact, which every one admits who sees her, that the Queen has aged much in the last two years.

THE Duchess of Portland is highly honoured, the Queen herself intending to be godmother to her Grace's fine little daughter, who will probably be another of the Lady "Victoria's" so frequent in the ranks of the peerage. Fortunately it is a pretty name, as well as an august one, for if Her Majesty graciously becomes sponsor the parents are almost called upon to make the child the Queen's namesake.

THE ex-Emperor of Brazil is now under restraint, his mind having entirely given way under the accumulation of misfortune. The latest blow—the hopeless insanity of Prince Augustus—sufficed to upset the reason of Dom Pedro, whose intellect for some time has shown signs of weakness.

FROM Birmingham we hear of the formation of a "Single Young Men's Association," whose members pledge themselves to abstain from entering the bonds of matrimony before they are twenty-six years. I have no doubt this little crusade against unduly early marriages will do good in the district to which it extends, and that it might with advantage be imitated elsewhere.

ALREADY a craze for gloves to match costumes has taken a firm hold of fashion's slaves, and numerous orders are received daily by the manufacturers, accompanied with a piece of the material of which some dress is to be made. The kid is dyed to match the dress, and the seams and embroidery on the back are of a colour which blends pleasantly with the shade of the glove.

IT is no exaggeration to say that a good portrait of the German Emperor has not yet been published; nor are the photographic studies successful. Many of the photographs sold of the Imperial couple and their children are "composed" by skilled photographers from rough oil paintings and drawings. The Emperor has an antipathy to sitting to photographers. In this he resembles his paternal grandmother. The effect of one of the few original photographs of the German artists (that published soon after the death of his grandfather) must have startled him as much as it distressed his best friends. Anything more self-conscious or theatrical it is difficult to conceive, and the recent order was prompted by the dissatisfaction which the Kaiser's better second thoughts were almost sure to arouse.

## STATISTICS.

UNTIL 1776 cotton spinning was performed by the hand spinning wheel.

THE first newspaper was published in England in 1588.

THE petroleum production of Southern California last year reached 18,000,000 gallons, valued at 1,200,000 dollars. It is largely utilised there as fuel.

NOVA SCOTIA is remarkable for the number of its old people. It has a larger population of centenarians than any other country, there being one to every 19,000 inhabitants, while England has only one in every 200,000.

ALL estimates agree in placing the probable total population of the United States, which this year's census will show at 65,000,000. That would be 15,000,000 more than the total of 1880, and would represent a growth of 30 per cent., or the same as that of the decennial period from 1870 to 1880.

## GEMS.

WE swallow at one mouthful the lie that flatters, and drink drop by drop the truth that is bitter.

MEN often go up to a temptation from which they should fly in a self-confident way; and they often fly when they should stand and fight.

AFFECTATION in any part of our carriage is lighting up a candle to our defects, and never fails to make us taken notice of either as wanting sense or sincerity.

NO enjoyment, however inconsiderable, is confined to the present moment. A man is the happier for life from having made once an agreeable tour, or having lived for any length of time with pleasant people, or enjoyed any considerable interval of innocent pleasure.

NOT a blade of grass but has a story to tell, not a heart but has its romance, not a life that does not hide a secret which is either its thorn or its spur. Everywhere grief, hope, comedy, tragedy. Even under the petrification of old age, as in the twisted forms of fossils, we may discover the agitations and tortures of youth.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

IN using ammonia for domestic purposes, one tablespoonful to a quart of water is about the ordinary proportion.

ORANGE PEEL CAKE.—Ingredients: Half pound of sugar, five eggs (yolks), whites of two; two ounces of lemon peel cut very fine, one orange (rind), half pound of flour. Beat all ingredients thoroughly before adding flour. Make cakes in fancy shapes, score into lines with knife and bake one hour in a slow oven.

MOTHER'S STEAMED PUDDING.—One cup of raisins seeded and chopped, one-half cup of chopped or sliced citron, one cup of milk, one-half cup of molasses, and one-half cup of sugar, two teaspoonfuls of soda dissolved in the milk, one teaspoonful (scant) of salt, one egg, flour enough to make a pretty stiff batter. Steam in a covered tin pudding dish or tin pail in rapidly boiling water four hours.

A PLEASANT thin tea cake is made with half a cup of butter, beaten to a cream, one egg well beaten and added to the butter finally a cup of milk, with half a teaspoonful of soda dissolved in it and two cups of flour, in which a teaspoonful of cream of tartar has been stirred. Beat this cake vigorously and bake it in sheets in shallow pans. This cake should be cut out in squares and served very hot on the tea table, where it should be split and buttered.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

A RENOWNED photographer has recently given, as his experience, that two sides of the human face are never alike, and a portrait taken at right side, three-quarters, or profile, is very different to the left side ditto of the same person.

A PHYSICIAN illustrating the evil custom of talking to an invalid about his pains, says that once he requested a mother to mark a stroke upon a paper each time that she asked a sick daughter how she was. The next day to her astonishment, she made 109 strokes. A three month's visit away from home was prescribed.

THERE are many curious customs observed by the Brazilians. Funerals are notable in that for a young unmarried lady, the coffin, hearse and livery of the driver must be bright scarlet,—the four white horses drawing the hearse must be covered with scarlet nets, and scarlet plumes must deck the horses' heads. No women go to the cemeteries. The mother, or the widow, must not exhibit her grief in public.

WHEN not carried in a pocket a watch should always hang by its ring in the same position as it is worn. As a rule, watches will run with a different rate when laid down. Only high-grade watches are adjusted to positions, and will show only a few seconds' difference in twenty-four hours, while common watches may be out of time several minutes in one night.

THE court of Pope Leo XIII. is said to comprise 1,160 persons. There are 20 valets, 120 house prelates, 170 privy chamberlains, 6 chamberlains, 300 extra-honorary chamberlains, 130 supernumerary chamberlains, 80 officers of the noble guard, and 60 guardsmen, 14 officers of the Swiss guard and palace guard, 7 honorary chaplains, 20 private secretaries, 10 stewards and masters of the horse, 60 door keepers.

TO produce a sea atmosphere for the sick room, a foreign contemporary suggests the use of a solution of peroxide of hydrogen (ten volumes strength) containing one per cent. of ozonic ether, iodine to saturation, and 2½ per cent. of sea salt. The solution, placed in a steam or hand spray diffuser, can be distributed in the finest spray in the sick room at the rate of two fluid ounces in a quarter of an hour. It communicates a pleasant sea odour, and is probably the best purifier of the air of the sick room ever used.

DOCTOR BENJAMIN RUSH, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, resided in Philadelphia in 1789 and 1790, when "la grippe" prevailed there, and afterward wrote a book on the disease and its symptoms. His work says that the disease was universal in its prevalence, and caused a cessation of business for more than a week. In the churches the sneezing and coughing were so loud and prolonged that the services had to be discontinued. Old men and children were the heaviest prey to the disease, and people having indoor employment did not suffer nearly so much as those who were constantly exposed. The Indians suffered from it intensely, and they ascribed their affliction to witchcraft.

A LARGE curtain or coverlet made of linen and wool, and discovered at Akhmim, in Upper Egypt, has recently been purchased for and is now exhibited in the South Kensington Museum. From the likeness of its ornamentation to that of hangings shown in a wall mosaic at Ravenna representing a corridor in Justinian's Palace, it may probably be accepted as a work of the sixth century, A.D. It is about 10 feet long by 6 feet wide. The main portion of its surface resembles that of a modern bath towel, being covered with long loose loops of flax, thus supplying evidence that weaving with a "floating" welt, as it is nowadays termed, was a process in a high condition of practice in Egypt more than 1,200 years ago.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**AN INTERESTED READER.**—You had better apply to the parish officer for advice and help in the matter.

**AUDREY.**—Presents given during an engagement can be recovered if the engagement is broken off.

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I'll take the letters he writes to me,  
And bury them under the damask rose."

The winds of the morning dried her tears,  
And tossed and tangled her curls of gold.  
She knelt and hallowed a tiny grave—  
The grave of love—in dusky mould.  
As she laid the letters therein, she heard  
The wildest creak in the garden close.  
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Ah! what do you bury under the rose?"

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"But I heard him singing as I came by."  
"Twas Trix, the terrier, passed away  
An hour ago," with a gentle sigh.  
"Ah, nay, my dear! in the hedge beyond  
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She blushed and fluttered, and hung her head;  
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1297

THE  
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of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

PART 334. VOL. LIII.—DECEMBER, 1889.

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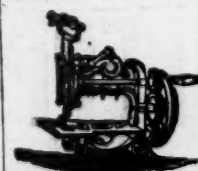
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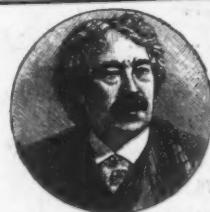
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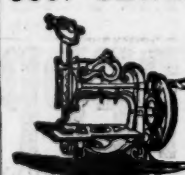
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